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JULY 2013 VOLUME 23 ISSUE 7

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound



£4.50



ONE LIFE STAND: RICHARD LINKLATER ON **BEFORE MIDNIGHT**

PLUS

BEN WHEATLEY'S 'A FIELD IN ENGLAND' • THE BEST FILMS IN CANNES
JOSHUA OPPENHEIMER ON 'THE ACT OF KILLING' • ABBAS KIAROSTAMI INTERVIEW



TABU

A STORY OF THE SOUTH SEAS

A FILM BY F.W. MURNAU

In 1929, F. W. Murnau (*Nosferatu*, *Faust*, *Sunrise*), one of the greatest of all film directors, invited leading documentarist Robert Flaherty (*Nanook of the North*, *Man of Aran*) to collaborate on a film to be shot on location in Tahiti, a Polynesian idyll in which Murnau imagined a cast of island actors would provide a new form of authentic drama and offer rare insight into their "primitive" culture. The result of their collaboration was *Tabu*, a film that depicts the details of indigenous island life to tell a mythical tale that is rich in the universal themes of desire and loss.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- Gorgeous new 1080p HD transfer • Full-length commentary track by R. Dixon Smith and Brad Stevens • 15-minute German documentary about *Tabu* by Luciano Berriatúa. • Newly presented outtakes from the original shoot of the film • 56-page booklet with articles by Scott Eyman, Richard Griffiths, and David Flaherty; an interview with the film's cinematographer Floyd Crosby; and the original story treatments written by Murnau and Flaherty for *Tabu* and its aborted predecessor *Turia*.



The Masters of Cinema Series

All three titles available on Blu-ray for the first time in the UK
Tabu also available on DVD.

Kaneto Shindō's *Kuroneko* is a sparse, atmospheric horror story, ascribing to the director's philosophy of using beauty and purity to evoke emotion. Eccentric and more overtly supernatural than its breakthrough companion piece, *Onibaba*, *Kuroneko* revisits similar themes to reveal a haunting meditation on duty, conformity, and love.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- New HD restoration of the film • Newly translated optional English subtitles • Original theatrical trailer • 24-page booklet.

The Naked Island tells the story of a small family unit and their subsistence as the only inhabitants of an arid, sun-baked island. Daily chores, captured as a series of cyclical events, result in a hypnotising, moving, and beautiful film. With hardly any dialogue, Shindō combines the stark 'Scope cinematography with the memorable score, to make a unique cinematic document.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- Beautiful new HD restoration of the film • Newly translated optional English subtitles • audio commentary by director Kaneto Shindō and composer Hikaru Hayashi • Video introduction by Alex Cox • 24-page booklet with essays, an interview with Shindō, and more.

Tabu and *The Naked Island* are released 17th June 2013
Kuroneko is released 24th June 2013

E.R.E.K.! The Masters of Cinema Series
mastersofcinema.org

F.W. MURNAU
TOHO
TRANSIT FILM



COMING SOON

July:

- *Le Pont Du Nord* (Rivette) • *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith)

All available from:

amazon.co.uk



20

Cannes: All that glitters

Nick James, Kieron Corless and **Geoff Andrew** assess the highs and lows of this year's festival PLUS **Clio Barnard** on the thrill of screening her film *The Selfish Giant* in Directors' Fortnight

REGULARS

5 **Editorial** Any size that fits

Rushes

6 **Pasquale Iannone** previews the Edinburgh International Film Festival

8 **Object Lesson: Hannah McGill** on sinister uses of the pillowcase

9 **The Five Key...**: Harryhausen creations

10 **First Sight: Samuel Wigley** talks to Gilles Bourdos about his drama *Renoir*

13 **Dispatches: Mark Cousins** crosses into a new world at the Cannes Film Festival

The Industry

14 **Development Tale: Charles Gant** on *Summer in February*'s 18-year journey to the screen

15 **The Numbers: Charles Gant** on an unusual new release strategy for Ben Wheatley's *A Field in England*

16 **Brewster: Ben Roberts** examines the ailing market for specialised distributors

19 **Geoffrey Macnab** on the battle to retain Europe's cultural exception

Wide Angle

52 **John Beagles** reports from Oberhausen

55 **Kieron Corless** finds Indie Lisboa thriving despite chilly financial times

56 **Soundings: Stuart Heaney** on Popol Vuh's score for *Aguirre, Wrath of God*

57 **Primal Screen: Mark Le Fanu** reassesses silent-movie acting

59 **Vlastimir Sudar** celebrates the career of Serbian filmmaker Zelimir Zilnik

III Letters

Endings

112 **Brad Stevens** on *Journey to Italy*

9



FEATURES

30

COVER FEATURE: Passing through

Reuniting Celine and Jesse after their tantalising encounters in *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset*, *Before Midnight* completes a unique portrait of a relationship. Director Richard Linklater talks to **Philip Horne**

36

Build my gallows high

In *The Act of Killing* the perpetrators of the massacres of millions of Indonesians re-enact their own crimes – with extraordinary results. Director Joshua Oppenheimer talks to **Nick Bradshaw**

40

Unspoken truths

Despite the sensationalist potential of its Tokyo vice setting, Abbas Kiarostami's *Like Someone in Love* is as rich in ambiguity as the director's great Iranian films. He talks to **Geoff Andrew**

44

Solitary sisters

The films of Austrian director Ulrich Seidl have always divided viewers. His new *Paradise* trilogy – in which three linked heroines search for different forms of salvation – is no exception. He talks to **Richard Porton**

48

This spectred isle

Set during the Civil War, Ben Wheatley's *A Field in England* belongs to a rich and varied tradition of British films that tap into the mysteries, magic and dark forces of our countryside, says **Kim Newman**



30



One of the most revered names in world cinema, Henri-Georges Clouzot, made a remarkably self-assured debut in 1942 with the deliciously droll thriller *The Murderer Lives at 21* [*L'Assassin habite au 21*].

A thief and killer stalks the streets of Paris, leaving a calling card from "Monsieur Durand" at the scene of each crime. But after a cache of these macabre identifications is discovered by a burglar in the boarding house at 21 Avenue Junot, Inspector Wenceslas Vorobechik (Pierre Fresnay) takes lodging at the infamous address in an undercover bid to solve the crime, with help from his struggling-actress girlfriend Mila (Suzy Delair).

Special Features: • Gorgeous new Gaumont restoration of the film in its original aspect ratio, presented in 1080p HD on the Blu-ray • New and improved English subtitles • New interview with Ginette Vincendeau, professor of French cinema at King's College London • A fully-illustrated booklet, including the words of Henri-Georges Clouzot and rare imagery



The Masters of Cinema Series

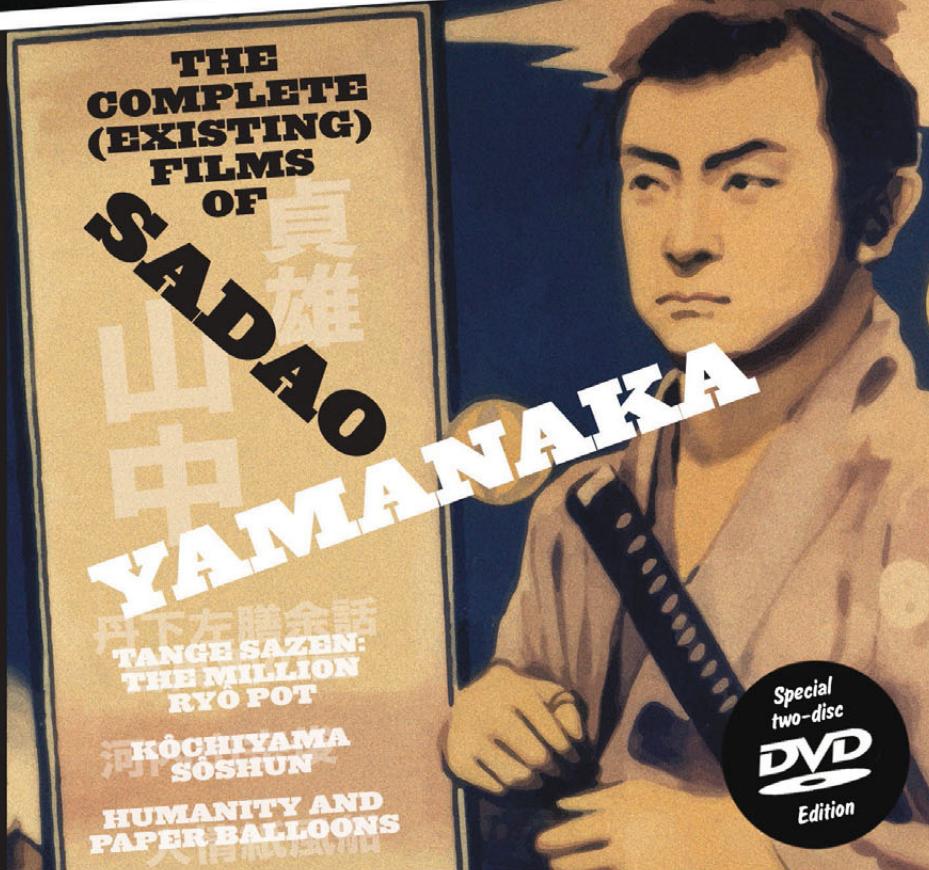
The Murderer Lives at 21 available on Blu-ray and DVD,
The Complete (Existing) Sadao Yamanaka available on DVD.
Coming Soon: June: *Naked Island* (Shindô) • *Kuroneko* (Shindô) • *Tabu* (Murnau)
July: *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith) • *Le Pont du Nord* (Rivette)

The brief but prodigious career of Japanese director Sadao Yamanaka resulted in a catalogue of work characterised by an elegant and unforced visual style, fluid editing, and a beautiful attention to naturalistic performances. Although he made 22 films over a six-year period (before dying on the frontline of WWII aged 29), only three of them survive, collected here for the first time in the West.

Contains the following films *Tange Sazen: The Million Ryô Pot*, *Kôchiyama Sôshun*, and *Humanity and Paper Balloons*.

The Masters of Cinema Series is delighted to present these treasures of world cinema in a long-awaited two-DVD set.

Special Features: • New digital transfers of all three films • New English subtitle translations • Rare fragments of other lost Yamanaka films • A new interview with critic and scholar Tony Rayns • A lengthy booklet, including Yamanaka's will, excerpts from his diaries, essays by Tony Rayns, Shinji Aoyama, Kimitoshi Satô, and more



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COVER

Before Midnight

NEXT ISSUE

on sale 9 July

Contents Reviews**FILMS OF THE MONTH**

- 62** *Behind the Candelabra*
- 64** *The Bling Ring*
- 66** *The Great Gatsby*
- 68** *Much Ado About Nothing*

FILMS

- 70** *The Act of Killing*
- 71** *Before Midnight*
- 72** *Bula Quo!*
- 72** *The Call*
- 73** *Chasing Mavericks*
- 73** *The East*
- 74** *Epic*
- 74** *Fast & Furious 6*
- 74** *A Field in England*
- 75** *The Hangover Part III*
- 76** *I Am Breathing*
- 76** *I Am Nasrine*
- 77** *I Want Your Love*
- 78** *Like Someone in Love*
- 79** *The Moth Diaries*
- 79** *Out in the Dark/Alata*
- 80** *Pain & Gain*
- 81** *Paradise: Faith/Paradies Glaube*
- 82** *Paradise: Love/Paradies Liebe*
- 83** *Renoir*
- 84** *The Seasoning House*
- 84** *Shun Li and the Poet/Io sono Li*
- 85** *Stand Up Guys*
- 86** *Star Trek Into Darkness*
- 87** *Stories We Tell*
- 88** *Stuck in Love*
- 88** *Summer in February*
- 89** *This Is the End*
- 90** *Tropicália*
- 90** *The Wall/Die Wand*
- 91** *The Words*
- 92** *oog Re:Cyborg*

HOME CINEMA

- 96** *Films by Mario Bava, Films by Tinto Brass, China Gate, Films by Delmer Daves, The Ealing Studios Rarities Collection, Forbidden Hollywood Volume 7, French Masterworks: Russian Emigrés in Paris 1923-1929, The Great Gatsby, The House in Nightmare Park, Knightriders, Masaki Kobayashi Against the System, A Man Vanishes + Imamura Shohei Documentaries, Richard III, Vito*
- DVD features**

- 94** **Jonathan Romney** welcomes a box-set of the work of comic master Pierre Etaix
- 98** **Philip Kemp** reappraises the last surviving works of Yamanaka Sadao
- Television**

- 103** *Journeymen, The Liver Birds, Veep*

BOOKS

- 104** **Kim Newman** rounds up three Peter Cushing-related publications for the actor's centenary
- 105** **Sophie Mayer** relishes the writings that defined New Queer Cinema
- 106** **Jane Giles** enjoys the gossipy memoirs of fan turned filmmaker Curtis Harrington



And online this month M. Night Shyamalan reconsidered | Ray Harryhausen remembered | A history of Nikkatsu Studios | Julian Pölsler | Sheffield Doc/Fest and more bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

CURZON

FILM WORLD



BEWARE OF MR. BAKER

A legendary, era-defining drummer who played with Cream, Blind Faith, Fela Kuti and many other groups, the mad, bad Ginger Baker is as well known for his debauched off-stage antics as he is for his groundbreaking musicianship. Following in the tradition of music documentaries like Searching for Sugar Man, Jay Bulger's award-winning and frequently hilarious portrait of a troubled genius is an insightful, detailed and boldly original film, featuring contributions from Carlos Santana, Stewart Copeland and Lars Ulrich, as well as Baker's band members Eric Clapton and Jack Bruce.

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A LATE QUARTET

The Fugue Quartet has performed together for over 25 years, attracting worldwide acclaim. But when one member admits that time may have finally caught up with him the group finds itself faced with an uncertain future of shifting dynamics and strained relationships, echoed by the complexities of their swansong piece – Beethoven's notoriously difficult String Quartet No. 14. An astute, poignant and uplifting drama, Yaron Zilberman's sensitive depiction of the New York music scene elicits career-best performances from a stunning ensemble cast including Christopher Walken, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Catherine Keener and Imogen Poots.

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Editorial Nick James



ANY SIZE THAT FITS

Every year when I come back from Cannes, I try to keep this page free of the C word because Cannes runs through the rest of the issue as if it were a stick of seaside rock.

Not only have Deputy Editor Kieron Corless and I – along with Geoff Andrew – written run-throughs of all the festival's best films in these pages, but also filmmakers Clio Barnard and Mark Cousins have pondered their own experiences there. So although the residue of the festival still fogs my mind, I have looked for a Cannes-free topic, especially now that so much of that fortnight's coverage happens during the event.

But even if – evidently – I've failed to stick to my resolution, attending the London launch of the Edinburgh International Film Festival has at least shifted my perspective. Of course, when listening to Artistic Director Chris Fujiwara's description of his enticing EIFF programme, what strikes one most forcibly is the extreme contrast in resources between his carefully curated but necessarily modest gathering of films and talent in June and the excess of the world's premier international film event. That's not to demean either festival as a Tom Thumb or a Goliath, but the Edinburgh-Cannes contrast does throw light on a question that Kieron Corless raises apropos Cannes. Is any one festival an accurate measure of 'the state of film culture'?

People do make sweeping generalisations after Cannes. I myself have remarked online that the absence of any film I saw there that fits the 'slow cinema' category – except Lav Diaz's excellent *Norte, The End of History* – might signal the passing of that post-Tarkovskian approach to cinema. To which anyone might reply that one goose flying south does not a winter make. More reasonably, it used to be accepted that if you experienced the big festival trio of Berlin, Cannes and Venice or Toronto (the latter two being, for this purpose, interchangeable as they happen at the same time), you'd have an overall sense of that year's cinema. North Americans might insist on adding Sundance to that line-up but I'd argue that the best films there always wash up on the shores of Cannes.

In the early years of this century, however, the boom in film festivals called that mindset into question, as international cinephilia expanded its field of interest into many unexplored crevices and new technologies

Under the influence of disparate ideas of what constitutes cinephilia, 'the state of film culture' has become too fluid and amorphous to be read in one sample. Is film culture now uncontrollable?



enabled many more people to make worthwhile films. Hence this magazine spread its net ever wider and made fruitful discoveries that otherwise might have been overlooked. In a sense smaller festivals became – to use a football analogy – feeder clubs to the big festivals.

Lav Diaz is a case in point. Championed for years by Rotterdam in particular, only this year did the Filipino director 'graduate' to the Cannes festival's Un Certain Regard section. Another case might be our very own Mark Cousins, who bridged the gulf between Cannes and Edinburgh because his new work *A Story of Children and Film* was selected for the former this year, while in the past he was a notable artistic director of the latter; arguably he was formed by the cinephilia of both festivals.

In that sense, what someone in Chris Fujiwara's position comes up with can occasionally be as influential as the feast on the Croisette – not that one wants to pile such a pressure of expectation on Edinburgh. And to reverse the argument, the conclusions you draw on the ground at Cannes can often prove distorted. Witness the debate that has exploded around the representation of lesbianism in *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* since it won the Palme d'Or. Would the film have attracted the same opprobrium had it not won? I doubt it.

In other words, under the influence of disparate ideas of what constitutes cinephilia, 'the state of film culture' has become too fluid and amorphous to be read in one sample. What's most interesting about this is how the shrinking of resources caused by the financial crisis is affecting both that plenitude and film festivals' ability to reflect it. Is film culture, in that sense, now uncontrollable? Is it ripe to be absorbed into a convergent media future that takes it away from the communal, perfect big-screen projection environment that Cannes prides itself on? Of course, this magazine prefers the big-screen option, and looks forward to festivals holding their ground, but they need to be aware that in the future they may not be the only routes to new cinema. **S**

EDINBURGH FILM FESTIVAL

PATIENT PROGRESS



Smooth operator: *Fantastic Voyage* director Richard Fleischer is being honoured with a retrospective

ON OUR
RADAR

Snowpiercer

Bong Joon-ho's sci-fi follow-up to 'Mother' is the highest-budgeted film in Korean history. With a cast including Tilda Swinton, Jamie Bell and John Hurt alongside Bong regular Song Kang-ho, expectations couldn't be higher. The film (right) premieres in August.



East End Film Festival

This year's event runs at various venues across East London from 25 June to 10 July, and includes a range of new films and special events. The festival opens with 'The UK Gold', and closes with the British premiere of the Linda Lovelace biopic 'Lovelace' (right).



After a period of flux, the festival is back in rude health under the direction of Chris Fujiwara, with a host of international treats on offer

By Pasquale Iannone

I first encountered Chris Fujiwara's film-writing back in 2003 when, as a postgraduate student researching an essay on the films of Jean-Pierre Melville, I came across his short piece on that director's *Le Cercle rouge* (1970). I was struck in particular by one line: "Suspense in Melville," Fujiwara writes, "is the power of cinema to tear life out of time, freeze it, remove it to an abstract space, and make it an object for contemplation." It seemed perfectly to crystallise Melville's mature style and led me to seek out some of Fujiwara's other writing on film, which included monographs on directors as varied as Jacques Tourneur, Otto Preminger and Jerry Lewis.

Eight years later, it was announced that Fujiwara would take the reins as artistic director of the Edinburgh International Film Festival. He was charged with restoring the festival's battered reputation after months of seemingly endless upheaval at the top of the organisation, culminating in a predictably disappointing 2011 edition. When the curtain came down on Fujiwara's first EIFF last year, the overriding impression was of mission accomplished, with smiles restored to everyone from the programming team to the press and – most crucially – to audiences. Fujiwara was handed a well-deserved three-year contract and has just unveiled the programme for the 67th edition, which runs from 19 to 30 June.

This year's line-up includes 146 features from 53 countries. New strands include 'American Dreams', a selection of US indie film including Sofia Coppola's *The Bling Ring* and Noah Baumbach's *Frances Ha*. Other strands include spotlights on the vibrant contemporary outputs of South Korea – Ryoo Seung-wan's blistering spy thriller *The Berlin File*, O. Muel's monochrome war drama *Jiseul* among others – and Sweden. One of Fujiwara's own favourites, Swedish crime drama *Roland Hassel*, sees the eponymous ageing cop determined to crack the unsolved 1986 murder of Prime Minister



Tunnel vision: Jean Grémillon's 1942 *Summer Light*

Olof Palme some 25 years later. Elsewhere, 'Not Another Teen Movie' brings together features and shorts selected by EIFF programmers aged between 15 and 19, and takes in works from Paraguay, Denmark and Canada.

The EIFF has always been renowned for its championing of British film, and 2013's Michael Powell Award nominees include Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor's *Mister John*. With clear echoes of *Get Carter* (1971) and *The Passenger* (1975), it sees Londoner Gerry (Aidan Gillen) arrive in Singapore to clear up the estate of his brother only to gradually take on his dead sibling's identity.

In another register entirely is anarchic, 90s-set teen comedy *We Are the Freaks*, the third feature from Justin Edgar with young actors from TV series such as *This Is England*, *Skins* and *Fresh Meat*. The film fits in with this year's focus on childhood and adolescence more generally, a theme explored in typically insightful fashion by Mark Cousins with his *A Story of Children and Film*, one of the highlights of the documentary strand, fresh from its rapturous reception in Cannes (see 'Dispatches', page 13).

The festival's two retrospectives celebrate

the careers of Jean Grémillon and Richard Fleischer. The former, one of the underrated masters of the golden age of French film, worked in both the silent and sound eras with dizzying élan. Presented in collaboration with the BFI, Grémillon screenings include 1942's *Summer Light* and the poetic realist *Lady Killer* (1937) with most showings accompanied by rarely shown shorter pieces by the director. Fleischer's colourful, varied career ranged from taut crime dramas (1952's *The Narrow Margin*, 1968's *The Boston Strangler*) to science fiction (1966's *Fantastic Voyage*) and historical adventures (1958's *The Vikings*) – a generous selection will screen both during and after EIFF.

The line-up is rounded out by experimental, animation and short film strands together with lectures, symposia, workshops and other special events such as an IMAX 3D showing of Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) and two episodes from eagerly awaited BBC crime-drama series *Peaky Blinders* starring Cillian Murphy and Helen McCrory. The EIFF revival, it would seem, continues apace. **S**

i The Edinburgh International Film Festival takes place from 19 to 30 June

ANATOMY OF A MOVIE

BEHIND THE CANDELABRA

29% Boogie Nights (1997)

21% Amadeus (1984)

17% Velvet Goldmine (1998)

11% A Star is Born (1954)

6% The Music Lovers (1970)

5% Fox and His Friends (1975)

4% I Could Go On Singing (1963)

3% Mommie Dearest (1981)

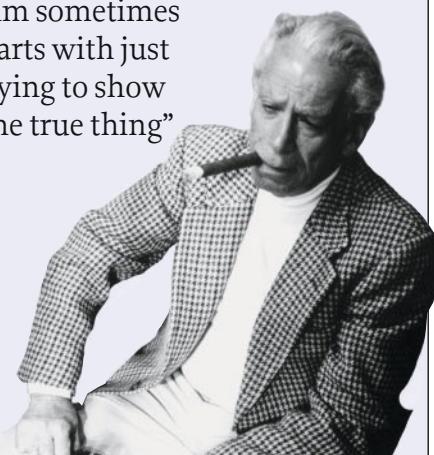
3% The Skin I Live In (2011)

1% Wonderland (2003)



QUOTE OF THE MONTH SAMUEL FULLER

"Extending the language of film sometimes starts with just trying to show one true thing"



BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE/2

Love/Hate

Set within the unforgiving milieu of Dublin's drug gang underworld, the Aidan Gillen-starring Irish TV drama 'Love/Hate' has been a huge commercial and critical hit in Ireland, and is to screen in the UK on Channel 5 from July.



Nicolas Roeg

The great British director of such enduringly enigmatic films as 'Don't Look Now' and 'Bad Timing' has penned a typically unique, ruminative and unpredictable memoir, which should throw new light on the making of his many films. 'The World Is Ever Changing' is published by Faber and Faber on 16 July.



Broadcasting the Arts: Television Looks at Film

How TV has reported and commented on cinema is the subject of a season at BFI Southbank in July, which includes interviews with great figures of the big screen (such as Orson Welles, appearing on 'Parkinson', above), set reports and critical discussions. There will also be a panel discussion, co-presented by 'Sight & Sound' and chaired by Danny Leigh.

BOYS IN THE HOODS

The humble pillowcase might not look much at first but becomes an icon of cinematic unpleasantness once a couple of eyeholes are added



By Hannah McGill

A pillowcase. It might bear witness to a certain amount of activity, but in and of itself it would initially appear to be a soft, floppy nothing of a thing. A thing for a Heather to insult another Heather with in 1988's *Heathers* ("You're such a pillowcase"); or for less caustic girlfriends to flirtatiously biff one another with, in that odd soft-erotica trope which reached its apotheosis with *Animal House* (1978) but actually dates right back to 1897 and the Edison Studios short *A Pillow Fight*. But the pillowcase gets slightly more hazardous when implicated in smotherings, as in *Amour* (2012), *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) and, er, *Pillow of Death* (1945); or stuffed with solid objects and deployed to beat someone with, as in *Bad Boys* (1995) and *The Grifters* (1990). And it really comes into its own as an icon of cinematic unpleasantness with the addition of a couple of eyeholes, and the resulting association with the hoods worn by the Ku Klux Klan.

The Klan is not only a frequent cinematic bogeyman but arguably a partly cinematic creation, in its modern form: D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915), originally titled *The Clansman*, revived the organisation's membership by romanticising its original, post-Civil War manifestation. Griffith designed his own Klan uniforms – long white gowns and masks worn with spiked helmets or pointed hats (although oddly enough, the young Cameron sisters are



Masked and anonymous: the unsettling Scarecrow from Christopher Nolan's 2005 *Batman Begins*

seen secreting the familial Klan robes inside pillowcases). By the time of *Gone with the Wind* (1939), if romanticising the antebellum South was still acceptable, fawning over the Klan was not. In Margaret Mitchell's 1936 source novel, Scarlett's husband Frank Kennedy and her secret love Ashley Wilkes are Klansmen who ride out to avenge her near-rape at the hands of a freed slave. In the film, the attacker is white and the group with which Frank and Ashley seek revenge goes unnamed – and certainly unhooded. In the wake of this new sensitivity, Griffith's film was demonised, which rankled with him. In a letter to this very journal in 1947, he complained that he had only "presented the known truth, about the Reconstruction period in the American South".

No such claim would be made by Quentin Tarantino regarding last year's *Django Unchained*. He didn't play up the sinisterness of the Ku Klux Klan hood so much as its

visual and functional absurdity: a prolonged skit has goofy proto-Klansmen complaining that their ill-fitting disguises, stitched out of pillowcases by one of their wives, obscure their vision as well as their features. Unable to ride or shoot straight, they're easy prey for Django and Dr Schultz. Whether this slab of slapstick constitutes a trivialisation of the Klan's crimes ("disrespectful to my ancestors," as Spike Lee claimed, without seeing the film) or a glorious renunciation of its power to appal ("my 'fuck you' to D.W. Griffith," as Tarantino put it) is a matter for debate; but certainly the scene wouldn't work at all without the uncomfortable

The shapeless covering of the hood removes expression and allows an anonymous, unrestrained id to emerge



Ride with the devil: Tarantino didn't play up the sinisterness of the hoods used by the Ku Klux Klan in *Django Unchained* so much as their visual absurdity

THE FIVE BEST...

HARRYHAUSEN CREATIONS



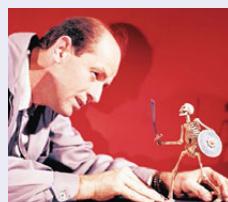
Animal House

potency of the pillowcase mask. Arguably any loosely masked cinematic monster – the unsettling Scarecrow from *Batman Begins* (2005); the child ghost from *The Orphanage* (2007) – channels some of the same power, the shapeless covering removing expression and allowing an anonymous, unrestrained id to emerge.

Even clean laundry can carry a creepy charge, in certain contexts. Interviewing David Lynch about *Lost Highway* in 1997, Gaby Wood identified an oddly troubling detail about the film: that the bedclothes slept on by Fred and Renée Madison change between two of the film's early bed scenes, from black to pink, even as all manner of vast, inexplicable forces conspire around the couple. "A moment ago we were in some abstract universe," wrote Wood. "Now we see these people have everyday lives, they change their sheets!" Lynch agreed: "It could be very small things that are horrifying. Just seeing one detail and the knowledge that came from that detail could be as frightening as death."

In Samuel Fuller's *Shock Corridor* (1963), the line between sanity and derangement is frighteningly thin. Journalist Johnny Barrett (Peter Breck) commits himself to a mental hospital to research an article, only to be tipped over the edge and go mad himself. "In Fuller's vision," writes Martin Scorsese in *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies*, "America had become an insane asylum." Barrett's self-internment and the self-defeating, hypocritical currents Fuller identified in American life are echoed in the character of Trent (Hari Rhodes), a black man who has unravelled due to the pressure of being the only black student at a Southern university. His madness expresses itself via his passionate support for the Ku Klux Klan – indeed, he thinks he has invented the organisation. He comes up with its name – "The Ku Klux... No, Ku Klux Klan... KKK..." – during a conversation with Johnny, while showing him his pillowcase, into which he's cut the requisite holes to make a hood. It's still just a pillowcase – an everyday thing. But an object, like a person, can shift position, shift social meaning – appear mad – with the slightest adjustment to its presentation. ☀

The creatures brought to life by the late Ray Harryhausen helped define the art of visual effects in the years before the advent of CGI



By Michael Brooke

The recent death of Ray Harryhausen at the age of 92 left several generations bereaved. Having been "stunned and haunted" by the visual effects in *King Kong* at the age of 13, he went on to become the cinema's defining special-effects auteur. He created creatures (never 'monsters') that were usually more expressive than the C-list actors they interacted with, breathing life into an entire artform.



A fuller Harryhausen feature will appear online at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound



1 Rhedosaurus

(*The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, 1953)

The upshot of ill-advised Arctic Circle nuclear tests, this radioactive Rhedosaurus wreaked its revenge on New York City the year before Godzilla blazed an even more iconic trail in Japan. Harryhausen's lifelong friend Ray Bradbury wrote the original story.



2 Cyclops

(*The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, 1958)

Harryhausen's first colour film debuted the term Dynamation as shorthand for his trademark blending of live action and animation. Its standout creation was this gigantic Cyclops, whose furry-legged and cloven-hoofed design was inspired by the Greek god Pan.



3 Talos

(*Jason and the Argonauts*, 1963)

Everyone remembers the fighting skeletons at the climax, but Harryhausen arguably pulled off a greater challenge when bringing this giant bronze statue to blank-faced, implacably terrifying life, threatening to turn the Argo into matchwood while crushing its cringing crew.



4 Kali

(*The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, 1973)

Harryhausen drew on Indian mythology for this evocation of the six-armed goddess Kali, simultaneously deadly (six flashing swords!) and eerily beautiful, especially when she performs a sensuous Hindu dance that brilliantly showcases Harryhausen's mastery of movement.



5 Medusa

(*Clash of the Titans*, 1981)

Harryhausen's own favourite among his creations: the snake-haired Gorgon who is herself part snake (an inspired conceit) and whose stare is literally petrifying both in life and death – although her creator thankfully proved immune to her power.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTISTS

Gilles Bourdos's *Renoir* tells the story of the young female muse who inspired both the painter Pierre-Auguste and his son Jean

By Samuel Wigley

Set in the South of France in the years when World War I was raging to the north, Gilles Bourdos's new film *Renoir* is the story of Andrée 'Dedée' Heuschling (Christa Théret), a flame-haired 15 year-old who enters the household of the elderly Pierre-Auguste Renoir (Michel Bouquet) as a model, becoming his final artistic muse before inspiring the painter's son Jean (Vincent Rottiers) to turn to the cinema. Under the stage name Catherine Hessling, Andrée would grace most of Jean's early films, before the couple separated in 1931.

Shot in honeyed Riviera light by Bourdos's regular DP Mark Ping Bing Lee, *Renoir* dramatises a unique moment of transference between a father and son, between one artform and another. A tribute to the observational sensibility of Renoir *père*, it's also a rare portrait of the film artist as a young man.

Samuel Wigley: Which of these three figures originally inspired you: Andrée, Jean or Pierre-Auguste?

Gilles Bourdos: I made the film because of her. She was my key to go inside the Renoir walls, this woman who was the last model of the father and the first actress of the son. Even in France this story is unknown. If you go to Musée d'Orsay in Paris, you can find her in all the last paintings by Renoir; she's at the Cinémathèque too. But you don't find much written about her. A woman who provides the bridge between painting and cinema – that was fascinating to me.

SW: What did you see in the actress Christa Théret that prompted you to cast her in the role?

GB: She has the same kind of energy Andrée used to have – an insolence, almost arrogance. Andrée was like a volcano; she was not a pretty, bourgeoisie girl.

SW: Do you admire the father or son more as an artist?

GB: Pierre was an incredible painter of the human body – there's so much grace, peacefulness, voluptuousness. But as a filmmaker, I have



The line of beauty: Michel Bouquet as Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Christa Théret as his muse 'Dedée'

a strong link with Jean. I don't like all of his films – for me he was a major master during the 1930s. From *La Chienne* [1931] until *La Règle du jeu* [1939] – that's an amazing filmmaker.

SW: In the film, Pierre-Auguste is portrayed as a man who turns away from reality to concentrate on beauty for its own sake.

GB: During the war, Pierre was in pain: his two sons came back from combat wounded, he's in grief – yet his painting is so full of life, colour, beauty, flesh. It's almost disturbing. He refused to use black; he refused to paint darkness.

Jean was different. As an artist you can refuse negativity and create beauty against the darkness, or you can be a witness. Jean used to do both: first as a witness, with *La Grande Illusion* [1937] and *La Règle du jeu*; then after the war, with *The River* [1951] and *French Cancan* [1955], he became like his father,

Andrée 'Dedée' Heuschling is a woman who provides the bridge between painting and cinema – that was fascinating to me

about the fantasy and the beauty. For me, Jean had the larger range of expressivity.

SW: What were your visual ideas for the film?

GB: We paid a lot of attention to the colour, which is unusual in French cinema. Most of our directors live in Paris, which is a very grey city. But in Renoir's films the colour is very strong. My biggest influence was *The River*, shot in India. It was the first time Renoir used colour. And in the last paintings by his father, there is a lot of red. So I tried to work in a lot of red. We shot in September, when the grass on the Riviera is yellow because it's dry, so we watered throughout the summer to keep everything green.

I don't do any storyboards, because before seeing the actors moving on the set I don't have any ideas about the shot. I love to work very organically. It's very important to keep my eyes open.

SW: That's the way Jean Renoir's crew worked during the 1930s, always open to chance.

GB: Exactly. For the last shot of *Partie de campagne* [1936], Renoir wasn't there – he was back in Paris. It was Cartier-Bresson and Claude Renoir; they were bored because it was always raining and they were waiting for the sun. But they shot under the rain and it's a beautiful shot!

SW: How did you recreate the painting scenes?

GB: On this movie there was no digital post-production, because I wanted to adopt an impressionist way of working – working with reality, nothing fake. But it was difficult to find a copyist to be able to paint like Renoir, so I found a forger, who was very capable of capturing the gestures and the way Renoir used to paint. When I met him, he came with his police records, and inside there were fabulous paintings by Renoir, Manet, Degas. So I said, "OK, you win. You're my guy!"

An actor is a forger too. On set we joked that for someone like Michel Bouquet to do Renoir, he could win an award for that. For a forger to do Renoir, he could go to jail. ☺

i 'Renoir' is released in the UK on 28 June and is reviewed on page 83



'An actor is a forger too': Renoir director Gilles Bourdos with Christa Théret on set

AMY
ACKER

ALEXIS
DENISOFF

REED
DIAMOND

CLARK
GREGG

FRAN
KRANZ

SEAN
MAHER

JILLIAN
MORGES

NATHAN
AND FILLION

"SWEET AND
VERY FUNNY"



CHRIS TOOKEY, DAILY MAIL

"CHARMING, WITTY,
HEARTFELT"



TOTAL FILM

"WHEDON AND
SHAKESPEARE ARE A
PERFECT MATCH"



EMPIRE

*A film by
Joss Whedon*

MUCH ADDO ABOUT NOTHING

"A MASTERPIECE"



HeyUGuys.co.uk

"SECOND TO NONE"



THE GUARDIAN

EMPIRE
CINEMAS

ODEON
MANICALIC KINETIC FILM

IN CINEMAS JUNE 14

Pictue
house

CURZON VUE



KALEIDOSCOPE PRESENTS A BELLWETHER PRODUCTION A FILM BY JOSS WHEDON "MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING"
AMY ACKER ALEXIS DENISOFF CLARK GREGG NATHAN FILLION FRAN KRANZ SEAN MAHER REED DIAMOND AND INTRODUCING JILLIAN MORGES CO-PRODUCER DANIEL S. KAMINSKY MUSIC SUPERVISOR CLINT BENNETT
MUSIC BY JOSS WHEDON COSTUME DESIGNER SHAWNA TRPCIC EDITORS DANIEL S. KAMINSKY JOSS WHEDON PRODUCTION DESIGNERS CINDY CHAO MICHELE YU DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JAY HUNTER
PRODUCED BY KAI COLE JOSS WHEDON BASED ON THE PLAY BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE ADAPTED FOR THE SCREEN AND DIRECTED BY JOSS WHEDON © 2012 MESSNA, LLC



Bellwether Pictures

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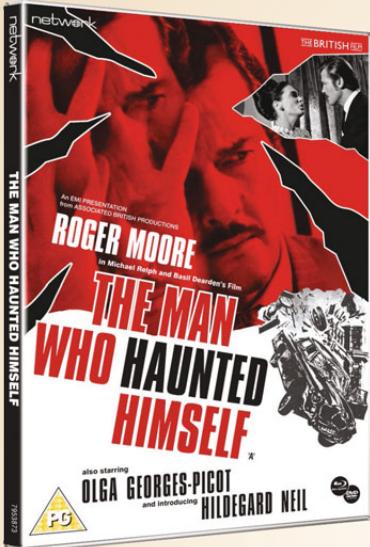
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12A

Network are proud to announce the launch of **The British Film** collection – a new range of classic films covering over half a century of British Cinema.

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Sir Peter Hall directs this sexy crime caper in which Stanley Baker plays a bank manager masterminding the robbery of his own bank. Co-stars David Warner and Ursula Andress. **Blu-ray + DVD Set**



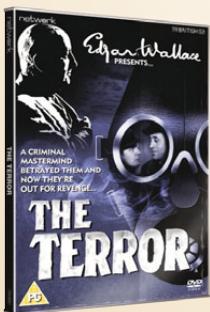
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This collection features *Cage of Gold* starring Jean Simmons, Herbert Lom and Bernard Lee and the 1946 hit *Frieda*; the tale of a German girl suffering discrimination in post-war Britain.



Horrors of the Black Museum

Michael Gough stars in this '50s British B-movie box office triumph in which a young man is hypnotised to make him commit a series of grisly murders.



Edgar Wallace's The Terror
Wilfrid Lawson and Bernard Lee star in this 1938 British crime film about two criminals on the hunt for their former comrade who betrayed them.



Devil Girl from Mars
This British B-movie cult classic stars Patricia Laffan as a vinyl-clad, raygun-toting Martian on the hunt for Earthmen to repopulate her home planet.

AVAILABLE THIS JUNE

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ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS

After 18 years at Cannes on the wrong side of the security barriers, I was finally granted insider status this year – for a few hours at least



By Mark Cousins

From the early 1990s, for 18 years, I went to the Cannes Film Festival every year. I mostly paid for the trip myself, saving up for the annual May foray. Four years ago I stopped going. I needed a respite and so I switched (lucky me) to the Telluride Film Festival, which is like Cannes decannes-ed.

This year, as I had a film in the Official Selection, Cannes Classics section (lucky me), I went back to Cannes. Before I did, my head kept running the line, “Last year, I went back to Marienbad again.” Would it be different this time? Would all those years of Cannes, all that growing up (I was still in my twenties when I first went to the festival) seem like a dream – like they didn’t really happen, as in Alain Resnais’s great film?

When I got to this former fishing village in the Alpes-Maritimes, which has been voted the most pleasant place in France and which has flirted with Le Pen, I had funny, familiar, forgotten feelings. I’d hoped that it would have changed somehow, that the sea would have moved, that the Mistral would have become gentler, but no. “The moon is just the moon,” as Oscar Wilde almost wrote. Nor were my first days any different from previous first days at the festival. My friends thought that, since I had a movie in the festival, I’d be carried around in a sedan chair but, er, no.

All was as before.

On my third night, as I sat alone in a bar in the old town watching the *festivaliers*, badged and bustling, a swarm of locusts stripping Cannes of its bouillabaisse and booze, I realised how insistent is its psychogeography. Its bays and boulevards force themselves into your anxieties and desires. As I sat there I thought, “This place is reminding me of something.” Then it came to me. Cannes is Peter Bruegel the Elder’s painting *The Tower of Babel*. Though he painted it circa 1563, Bruegel could have been one of the bustling badged. In the bottom right of his picture are the yachts of the millionaires, bobbing in the Med. The Croisette loops the shore, a pastiche corniche. In the bottom left, Leonardo DiCaprio is robed and flanked by courtiers and the festival’s *délégué général* Thierry Frémaux; a cinephile-serf prostrates himself at their feet. Talk about photo-realism!

Bruegel’s centrepiece, however, is his portrait of the Palais des Festivals itself. Towering, polyglot, hierarchical, difficult to navigate, it imposes itself on its surroundings and guards its secrets within. The painter captures the daunting quality of the festival’s main building: how you must find your status, your language within it. Bruegel’s tower – like its Cannes counterpart – is



Festival Babylon: Peter Bruegel the Elder's uncannily prescient vision of the Cannes Film Festival

a palace, citadel, consolation, court.

Over the next few days I went about seeing films (Claude Lanzmann’s *The Last of the Unjust* reminded me why I love cinema), losing myself like Anthony Perkins in Welles’s *The Trial* – and finding myself like Anna Karina in Godard’s *Vivre sa vie*.

But then the day of the screening of my film, *A Story of Children and Film*, dawned. The previous night we’d heard that the festival would host a small cocktail party for us. It would be in the Terrace des Festivals (top left in Bruegel’s picture). As we drank, people with walkie-talkies and clipboards arrived – the festival’s top team. My colleagues were asked to go into the cinema first. I had to go last and stand at the back. I did, and there was Thierry F, and suddenly he was at the front of the cinema, saying nice things, and then so was I, and the film ran... and the reviews came out... and my email inbox went crazy.

Two days later, I was invited to the festival

For years I have felt like the women at the front of Gauguin’s picture, looking out to another realm



Paul Gauguin's Vision of the Sermon

lunch. The people on the door recognised me and ushered me in. The first person I was introduced to by Thierry was Daniel Auteuil. I sat next to the Cambodian director Rithy Panh, whose film I had just seen and loved. Cristian Mungiu was there, and Nicole Kidman. I sat opposite Jia Zhangke, and Ang Lee nodded hello. Bernardo Bertolucci arrived like Gene Kelly and reminded me of how I’d once sent him a Cole Porter song. We talked about PTSD and kilts, Lanzmann (who was there too) and Welles.

And guess what? I thought of Bruegel no more. Instead, another picture had come to mind: Paul Gauguin’s *Vision of the Sermon*.

For years in Cannes I have felt like the women at the front of Gauguin’s picture, huddled into a tight space, looking out – past the tree-trunk that bisects the image – to another realm, where an angel wrestles Jacob. The tree-trunk is like the many security barriers in Cannes that keep us off the red carpet, where the saintly people are. So we stand and gawp. It is also a threshold between the prosaic world of the women and the poetic one of the angel and Jacob, which is like a movie screen.

This year in Cannes, for about 36 hours, I stepped across that threshold. I jumped the trunk and was on the side of the angels. I liked it there. The word *non* seemed banned, the squid salad had much to recommend it – as had Bertolucci’s smile, Thierry’s choice of words and Lanzmann’s existence.

It seems a bit suspect that my life as a filmmaker changed a bit in those 36 hours. Sophia Loren once said that Cannes is like a trampoline. Maybe that’s how I got over the tree-trunk – I bounced. I’m lucky enough to have had good responses to my films before, in many places, but Cannes is ridiculously visible. Even on its rainy days, its white light shows a lot and draws many.

Now I’m back where I belong, on the outside. I think. I hope. ☀

DEVELOPMENT TALE

SUMMER IN FEBRUARY



A couple of coves: Emily Browning as Florence Carter Wood and Dominic Cooper as 'A.J.' Munnings in *Summer in February*

A 1995 novel about Edwardian artists in Cornwall has just reached the screen, courtesy of two former pupils of its writer Jonathan Smith

By Charles Gant

Jeremy Cowdrey never expected to become a movie mogul. He worked in the City for 20 years, only quitting in 2000 when he suffered a serious illness. On recovery, it was his wife who encouraged him to look for fresh challenges, prompting him to think seriously about trying to help his old friend and former schoolteacher Jonathan Smith turn his 1995 novel *Summer in February* into a feature film.

Based on the experiences of Alfred Munnings and fellow artists in eve-of-WWI Lamorna Cove, Cornwall, the tale's filmic qualities had long been evident to its author. A tragic romance set against dramatic coastal scenery, focusing in particular on the love triangle between Munnings, artist Florence Carter Wood and their friend Gilbert Evans, it's a story that suggests both a defined audience and international appeal. But it's nevertheless taken 18 years from the book's publication to the film's arrival in cinemas as an appropriately classy

£5 million UK production, starring Dominic Cooper and *Downton Abbey*'s Dan Stevens.

In the first stretch of that long journey Smith – who for decades had combined teaching English and directing drama at Tonbridge School with writing novels, non-fiction and radio plays – had his hopes of a film serially raised and dashed. Meetings with film-industry folk, he recalls, went nowhere: "A lot of chat. Nothing substantial. Going up to London feeling excited, coming home feeling excited, and then nothing happening." Invariably a similar-sounding upcoming film – 1995's *Carrington*, for example – was cited as a reason not to proceed.

Finally, in 2006, Cowdrey stepped in. "I was never on an ego trip thinking I wanted to be a film producer," he says. "All I wanted to do was get this story into the hands of someone who could make the film. After a while it became apparent that the person who had the passion had to take it all the way."

So began a baptism of fire for the former stockbroker, including a producer course ("It was quite depressing – all they did was supply stats as to why you're mad to ever try to get involved with a film"), talking to friends in the industry (music supervisor George Fenton begged him not to do it) and following the guidance of line producer Charlotte Ashby

("For the next couple of years, where I was a blind man, she held my arm and made sure I didn't make a complete idiot of myself").

A script by Julian Sedgwick (listed as "writer in development" in the film's credits) turned out to be a too-faithful recreation of the novel. Which made Cowdrey's next choice of screenwriter somewhat counterintuitive: the novelist himself. "We took a slight gamble," he admits. For his part, says Smith, "I've always been told – and I can understand totally – that writers don't make good adapters of their own work. You need to be more ruthless." But he had no intention of being overly reverential, and decided not to reread his own novel, letting the heart of the drama guide his storytelling and the subsidiary elements fall away. "I didn't find it at all difficult leaving out lots of things that I'd loved writing about."

While Smith worked on multiple drafts, notes and suggestions came in from actor Dan Stevens, another former pupil of the writer. Then the project went into hiatus after Cowdrey's wife died of cancer in 2009. It was another two years before he felt ready to push ahead, picking up fresh steam after meeting seasoned producers Pippa Cross and Janette Day (*Vanity Fair*), whose standing in the industry added welcome heft. In the meantime Cowdrey had also been planting the seeds with likely investors, circulating

THE NUMBERS A FIELD IN ENGLAND

Smith's book to his friends and contacts.

Suddenly everything was moving very swiftly. For the role of Evans, Cowdrey had always had his eye on Stevens, whose growing profile from ITV's *Downton Abbey* was making him an ever more valuable asset. But Stevens's agents planned to send him to the US in 2012 after shooting the third series of *Downton*, meaning his availability ended after February. Already, it was autumn 2011. The producers – Stevens himself now among them – decided to go for it, with a shoot starting mid-January. But first Cowdrey would need to nail down the money. Given the urgency, it was too late to try to engage conventional partners such as the BFI or BBC Films.

The process proved tougher than anticipated. "I hadn't realised how much damage other people had done raising film finance," Cowdrey explains. "A lot of very wealthy people who I knew through the City said, 'No, I'm really sorry. Been there, got the T-shirt. No thanks.' If someone's had a bad experience, they just write that whole asset class off." But Cowdrey was determined that *Summer in February* would be different, offering a highly transparent deal with equal recoupment status for everyone, himself included. "I didn't think I could ask other people to invest if I didn't do so myself," he explains.

There remained one big hole: a lead actor. In the film, Munnings is a larger-than-life character, the beating heart of the Lamorna Cove artists' scene who sweeps in and steals

Dominic Cooper came back on the Monday morning with a text to his agent: 'Get me on the Cornwall film!'

Carter Wood while the courtly Evans is gently wooing her. "If you have a rubbish Munnings, then you would have a rubbish film," says Cowdrey, and unfortunately their first choice, Dominic Cooper, was committed elsewhere. Luckily the financing for that project fell apart, and the actor spent a weekend considering all the offers on the table. Cowdrey recalls: "He came back on Monday morning with a text to his agent: 'Get me on the Cornwall film!'"

With direction from Christopher Menaul, a veteran of TV dramas including *Prime Suspect* and *The Forsyte Saga*, and cinematography by Andrew Dunn (*Gosford Park*), the film will follow the UK-release pattern of previous summer hits such as *Coco Before Chanel* and *A Royal Affair*, providing an under-served upscale audience with a classy alternative to blockbuster fare. As a total outsider to the industry, Cowdrey takes some pride in the fact that his film has been validated by the BFI's Distribution Fund, which has committed £160,000 to help break it out to a wider audience.

"My slight worry about the route I took was that people would think it's a bunch of rich idiots having an ego trip, which it's never been," Cowdrey insists. "Everyone has been passionately involved with it. It feels good to have the stamp of the BFI on it."

i *Summer in February* is released in the UK on 14 June and is reviewed on page 88

By Charles Gant

While the film industry remains attached to its traditional model of sequential windows – recouping revenues through theatrical, DVD, digital and television platforms – cracks in the edifice are beginning to grow. It's more than seven years since Tony Jones, then head booker for Picturehouse cinemas, created a modest theatrical run for Michael Winterbottom's *The Road to Guantanamo* in the days and weeks following its premiere on Channel 4.

Now Picturehouse – whose dual status as cinema operator and film distributor arguably makes it well placed to take a more rounded and less partial view of audience needs – is experimenting again. Together with Film4, the Film4 channel and 4DVD, the partners are presenting the first film ever to receive a simultaneous release in UK cinemas, on free television, via video-on-demand platforms and on DVD and Blu-ray, to rent and to own. On 5 July, audiences will be offered the chance to watch Ben Wheatley's English Civil War drama *A Field in England* however and wherever they wish.

While the main multiplex chains – Odeon, Vue, Cineworld and Showcase – are showing no signs of negotiating away their exclusive 17-week theatrical window, smaller exhibitors have long taken a more flexible position. In 2009, fashion documentary *The September Issue* proved that it was possible to succeed in cinemas and on home entertainment simultaneously, when the DVD's arrival ten days into the theatrical run barely had an impact on ticket sales. Over at Curzon Artificial Eye, the company is being increasingly ambitious with the kinds of titles it presents on its VOD platform concurrently with a theatrical release. These have included *A Late Quartet*, *Berberian Sound Studio* and *Holy Motors*.

Picturehouse's Gabriel Swartland agrees that the release of *A Field in England* is an experiment, but one he hopes will prove that

for many audience members "the theatrical experience stands up on its own", even when presented concurrently with alternative – and potentially cheaper – platforms. It doesn't hurt that the film is being jointly distributed by Picturehouse and 4DVD, with both sharing the theatrical and DVD revenues. And then there is the tempting contribution of Channel 4's marketing muscle, which will promote all the platforms, not just the channel's own.

In other words, explains Swartland, for a title where "we would not have been able to consider TV advertising, as the number of screens that the film would open in wouldn't warrant it", the release will benefit from huge visibility. And instead of each partner having to spend separately to promote its own window in the chain, says Swartland, "We are all leveraging these different platforms, with the benefit of a single concentrated campaign to maximise the budget and really make things stretch."

While none of the partners would wish to characterise Wheatley's latest film as in any way smaller than its genre-inflected predecessors *Kill List* and *Sightseers*, its arrival through the more experimental Film4.O production hub and its description as a "psychedelic trip into magic and madness" both suggest this is a different film requiring a different treatment. Financial support has been made available by the BFI's New Models distribution fund which will, for example, resource a live satellite Q&A with Wheatley and cast members on 5 July, beamed from London's Ritzy Brixton. This event, further talent Q&As and an ambitious website targeting Wheatley fans and aspiring filmmakers (with a wealth of material about the shooting and editing, including raw rushes) are all about extending engagement and reach. All sectors of the industry, especially in distribution and exhibition, will be studying the outcome with particular interest. ☈

i *A Field in England* is released in the UK on 5 July and is reviewed on page 74. See also feature on page 48



Hear my prayer: Film4 and Picturehouse are pioneering a new release pattern for *A Field in England*

DOG DAY EVENINGS

BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS



The rights stuff: *Blue Is the Warmest Colour*

We know these are hard times for distributors of specialised film in the UK and we're looking to see what we can do to support them



By Ben Roberts

On the evidence of the bruises, Cannes was tougher than ever for UK distributors on the hunt for new films. During what is typically the more leisurely back-stretch of the festival, a skirmish broke out over the rights to the Palme d'Or-winner *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* (eventually won by Artificial Eye), and some of the stronger niche titles proved to be out of reach of our boutique operators. That suggests a competitive marketplace. So what's the problem?

In truth, these are the dog days for distributors of specialised films. This year we lost two of our more adventurous outfits. Revolver collapsed and Momentum was merged with a more commercially focused E1. As the news sank in, we at the Film Fund noticed that the number of strong projects applying to us without a UK distributor attached was rising rapidly. This means we will be taking more of a chance that films we back will find a cinema outlet. Other hot projects, which should have had several suitors courting the producers for rights, now limp across the line with one mild offer. So we've decided to take a closer look at the prospects for specialised films in the UK to see how we might be able to help.

The main problems facing independent distributors are as follows. There are too many films fighting for too few screens – the number released in the UK annually has close to doubled in the last ten years, from 370 to 650, without

There are too many films fighting for too few screens – the number released in the UK has close to doubled in the last ten years

any growth in admissions. That's a bun fight that leaves a scary number of films homeless. The quantity of specialised films was up by 117 per cent in the same period, yet you can count the number of truly dedicated specialised circuits on one finger. There has been much talk of alternate distribution platforms offering new opportunities for independent films, but the true home of film remains the cinema, and we can't let exhibitors off the hook. We have to find new ways to encourage them to broaden their menu. In addition, the virtual print fee (VPF) model – developed to help pay for the costs of installing digital projectors in cinemas – continues to disadvantage specialised films, burdening them with higher costs than those incurred by traditional 35mm. With the impetus of the Film Policy Review and the support of the Film Distributors' Association behind us, we're going to do what we can to fix this.

Where emerging platforms are concerned, another major challenge for specialised film is the subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) hierarchy – there's a polarisation between those who have a rich Lovefilm/Netflix deal and those who do not. The assumption is that, in time, VOD and SVOD will pick up the slack from waning DVD sales. But these platforms pay handsome licence fees to the larger distributors that have an output deal, even on relatively limited releases, and they are largely blind to quality. Concept, cast and title are the only drivers: it's like the video-rental business all over again, and truly specialised distributors struggle for visibility on a 38-inch home screen.

Film4 and BBC Films aside, when it comes to UK rights for specialised films, terrestrial and satellite TV continue to be incredibly selective, and low-paying. If my prognosis seems gloomy, it may be that too much rose was flowing in Cannes, yet others have noted that the prices being paid this year mean there will soon be blood on the arthouse floor. But what it also tells me is that we do have distributors who love films, and want to share them with audiences. We must look closely at what we can do to support them. We can – and should – help on the VPF front, and the revamped Distribution Fund is designed to help needy distributors to punch above their weight. There is certainly more we can do. Watch this space. **S**

IN PRODUCTION

● **Paul Thomas Anderson**'s next feature *Inherent Vice* appears to be well on the way into production. Josh Brolin has recently joined an extensive cast that includes Joaquin Phoenix, Martin Short, Reese Witherspoon and Owen Wilson for Anderson's adaptation of the detective novel by Thomas Pynchon. Filming begins later this summer.

● **Michael Mann** has reportedly been scouting locations in China for his next, as-yet-untitled feature about the joint US-China pursuit of a rogue hacker hailing from the Balkans, and at loose somewhere in South-East Asia. The film is being produced by Legendary Pictures, and Mann has cast Chris Hemsworth in the lead role. Casting is underway for the Chinese roles.

● **Carlos Saura**, the Spanish director of such classic dance films as 1981's *Blood Wedding*, 1983's *Carmen* and 1998's *Tango*, is taking to the floor once again with a project about tango entitled *Argentina*, reportedly to be more of a straight documentary than the 1998 film, which incorporated fictional elements. Shooting starts this autumn.

● **Todd Haynes** has announced that his next project will be an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's novel *Carol*, which chronicles the friendship between two very different women in 1950s New York – one in her twenties who works in a department store, the other a mother trapped in a loveless marriage. Phyllis Nagy is writing the script, and Mia Wasikowska and Cate Blanchett have signed up for the lead roles. The film is to be co-developed by Film4, with Stephen Woolley and Elizabeth Karlsen producing.

● **Christophe Gans**, director of *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, is in post-production on his version of the 'Beauty and the Beast' fairytale, starring Vincent Cassel and recent Cannes-winner Léa Seydoux in the lead roles. Early footage was apparently very well received at Cannes.

● It seems **Steven Soderbergh** (below) must have been choosing his words carefully when he insisted he was retiring from filmmaking, as he is now reportedly lined up to produce and direct *The Knick*, a ten-episode TV series set in a hospital that will star Clive Owen. Soderbergh is also reportedly preparing a 12-hour TV adaptation of John Barth's novel *The Sot-Weed Factor*.



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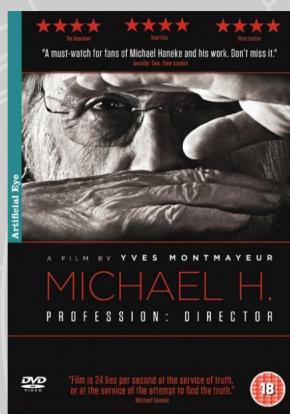




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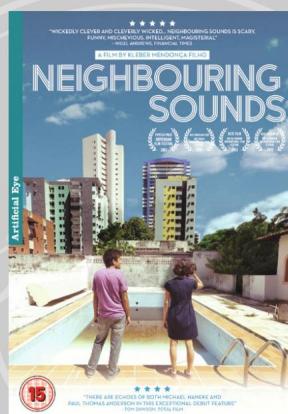


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PROTECT AND SURVIVE

The prospect that European films could lose their exemption from rules governing free trade with the US has prompted a storm of protest

By Geoffrey Macnab

When European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, whose responsibilities include culture and education, attended the Cannes Film Festival this year, she provoked a small furore with her choice of viewing. The commissioner traditionally attends a red-carpet screening and this year she watched the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis*. It was among the best-liked films in competition but what it most certainly wasn't was European.

The Dutch, in particular, were outraged. "It's a disgrace," complained one senior Dutch industry source of Vassiliou's decision to favour the Coens over Alex van Warmerdam's *Borgman*, which was screening on the same night – the first Dutch feature in competition in Cannes for 38 years.

A spokesperson for the commissioner defended her actions, saying she was simply doing what she had been told by her hosts. "As a matter of choice, she would much rather have seen a European film," the spokesperson commented, pointing out that she would be accompanying Danish director Thomas Vinterberg, the winner of the 2013 European Union Prix MEDIA, to *Inside Llewyn Davis*.

It was Vassiliou's misfortune that this year's Cannes had fallen during the middle of a fierce debate about the so-called 'cultural exception', which for the last 20 years has ensured that culture, and significantly film, has been treated differently to commercial products under international free-trade rules. This has enabled European countries to engage in old-style cultural protectionism, for example through subsidies for local productions, to help offset the dominance of Hollywood.

The exemption originated in the 1990s during talks between the French and the US for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The French, under their flamboyant culture minister Jack Lang, stood up to the might of the Motion Picture Association of America, led by the belligerent Jack Valenti, and successfully argued that culture should be given special status.

But recently, as EU/US trade and investment negotiations approached, there was outrage in European film circles that Europe's cultural exception might be waived. The draft version of the new agreement had failed to exclude the audiovisual and cultural sectors from the free-trade discussions in spite of opposition from three commissioners, among them Vassiliou.

As the panicked press releases and petitions issued by many leading European film organisations made clear, what was now considered at risk was European culture in general and the health of the European film industry in particular. The arguments were the same as they had always been: Europe was at a huge competitive disadvantage to its



Hollywood, Wim Wenders pointed out, draws heavily on Europe for films to remake, and as a source of new talent

Hollywood rivals and its film sector would wither and die without government support.

Speaking to the trade magazine *Screen International* during Cannes, German director Wim Wenders turned the familiar arguments on their head. Wenders suggested that abandoning the cultural exception would end up hurting the US industry just as badly as it would the Europeans.

"In Europe, cinema is part of our language, part of our culture, like painting or literature or music," Wenders said. "If we accept the American proposition of seeing it [film] as an industrial product, we pull the plug from our entire industry. A few years later, there will not be any more European movies."

Wenders said the end of the cultural exception would be "a bigger disaster for Hollywood... if the entire underbelly of European movies was no longer there as a counterpart and enrichment".

Hollywood, Wenders pointed out, draws heavily on Europe for films to remake, and as a source of new talent: "If we pull the plug from European cinema, Hollywood would in the long run suffer just as badly."

The Europeans mounted an impressive and aggressive campaign to preserve the exemption. Even before Cannes started, more than 5,000 directors, writers, technicians, producers, distributors and exhibitors across Europe had signed a petition expressing their concern about the issue. Among the filmmakers rallying to the cause were the Dardenne brothers, Aki Kaurismäki, Ken Loach and Pedro Almodóvar.

Trade and industry bodies including Eurocinéma, Europa Cinemas, Europa Distribution, Europa International, FIAD, SAA and UNIC had likewise proclaimed that the cultural exception was non-negotiable and had railed against the European Commission for not making this clear to their American trading partners.

The statement from the European Film Academy was especially blunt: "To not respect the cultural exception in the negotiations starting this June would threaten independent cinema and the author's freedom of expression. It would also result in European films vanishing from cinema screens in Europe and around the world and in irreparable damage to European culture. A Europe which neglects the importance of its culture would reduce the European Union to a purely administrative and economic body, thus putting an end to the European dream with all its negative consequences."

Even some Americans, including Harvey Weinstein, joined the campaign in support of the European position.

Having grown used to stories of bungling bureaucrats and administrative discord at the heart of Europe, it was perhaps something of a surprise how effective all this lobbying ultimately proved. In late May, the European Parliament voted with a large majority in favour of a resolution calling for the exclusion of cultural and audiovisual services, including online services, from the negotiating mandate of the free-trade agreement between the US and the EU.

The negotiations are yet to take place and there may yet be a sting in the tail, but it seems that the cultural exception will be saved. It's also a fair prediction that if Commissioner Vassiliou is back in Cannes and walking up the red carpet next year, she will make sure she watches a European film. ☀

CANNES

ALL THAT GLITTERS

At one of the strongest festivals in recent memory, the yawning gulf between rich and poor provided a quality seam for filmmakers to mine. But there was intimacy too alongside the satire and the social commentary, not least in Abdellatif Kechiche's deserving prizewinner. **By Nick James**

As the fireworks for *The Great Gatsby* fought the rain in drizzling sparks, and thieves made off with the Chopard jewels worn by the cast of the Un Certain Regard opener *The Bling Ring*, little did we know that this conjunction of events had also announced the underlying themes of Cannes this year: our fascination with baubles and the canyon that separates us from the super-rich. And if Sofia Coppola's bland, incurious tale of teenage theft from the celebrity rich deserved to be upstaged, the motif would soon be brilliantly exemplified by Paolo Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty* (*La grande bellezza*), the best of the competition films ignored by Steven Spielberg's jury.

Sorrentino's film is a withering portrait of the city of Rome and one cynical inhabitant of its *dolce vita*, Jep Gambardella (Toni Servillo), a self-deprecating writer of arts-magazine articles and a friend of the rich who's as vicious about his dining companions as he is dismissive of his own talent. This film's self-admitted "huge mass of interlocked facts, characters and anecdotes" (as its director describes it) casts a fascinated eye over the cavernous marble palaces and terraces stalked by the rich of the Berlusconi era. At first it feels stilted, hollow even (which may be one reason why it was denied a prize), as a Japanese tourist collapses as if from vertigo at seeing Rome's architectural marvels. But then we're transported to a brilliantly choreographed party sequence, as a grotesque parade of Gambardella's acquaintances cavort to a pounding techno track.

The film really begins to gel, however, as we get to know the author himself, an ageing would-be Flaubert who can't find an appropriate ending flourish to a life lived in idleness. Many of Fellini's best-known films (*Roma*, 8½, *La dolce vita*, *Casanova*, *Satyricon*) are present ghosts, as is Ettore Scola's *La terrazza* (1980), but this is more than a night-stalking tribute to Italian cinema. Servillo's super-dry performance creates one of the more pungent screen characters of recent years. Excess is Sorrentino's métier, and he handles it better than either Baz Luhrmann's pop-up kids' book Fitzgerald or Steven Soderbergh's programmatic biopic

of Liberace, *Behind the Candelabra* – which likewise revels in the pure kitsch of a luxurious life (see p.28, and Films of the Month p.62).

There's no doubt, too, which class of people Claire Denis means by her title *Bastards*, her darkest tale of recent times, which suggests that the super-rich – here impersonated imperturbably by a chin-jutting Michel Subor – are untouchable (see p.27). But where all these works I've cited are scathing about the power of money, Valeria Bruni Tedeschi's semi-autobiographical *A Castle*

MY CANNES TOP TEN

- 1. Norte, The End of History**
(below) Lav Diaz
- 2. The Great Beauty** Paolo Sorrentino
- 3. Inside Llewyn Davis** Ethan & Joel Coen
- 4. Blue Is the Warmest Colour**
Abdellatif Kechiche
- 5. The Selfish Giant** Clio Barnard
- 6. Heli** Amat Escalante
- 7. Manuscripts Don't Burn**
Mohammad Rasoulof
- 8. Omar** Hany Abu-Assad
- 9. The Missing Picture** Rithy Panh
- 10. Bastards** Claire Denis



in Italy (*Un Château en Italie*) treads a fine line between self-critique and special pleading. So much so that its more elegant passages are punctuated with stumblings, both of the slapstick and metaphorical kind. The milieu here is similar to that of Luca Guadagnino's *I Am Love* – the surviving family of a rich Milan industrialist falls on harder times – but the results are of a more uncertain pitch.

The director herself plays Louise, a former actress adrift in mid-life who meets a much younger actor (Louis Garrel). When he comes on to her, she's torn between him and her family's pressing concerns: a brother dying of an AIDS-related illness; a mother who's hiding debts that only the sale of valuable objects – including a Bruegel painting – can settle. Some scenes are carried off with wit and panache – as when the ill brother (Filippo Timi) dances with his mother – and I liked the blatancy with which Bruni Tedeschi has a character quote the line "the rich suffer too", but people keep falling to the floor in theatrical abjection. Given that Bruni Tedeschi and Garrel are former lovers, and that her mother Marisa Borini plays Louise's mother, it's also a touch ridiculous that the director, when interviewed, refused to answer questions of a private nature – a case of *noblesse n'oblige pas*.

Also failing to oblige were the rich financiers sought by James Toback and Alec Baldwin during last year's Cannes, as captured in Toback's light-hearted documentary **Seduced and Abandoned**, which contrasts the insatiable need to make artful films with the impossibility of financing them. Cannes allowed the sharp-witted duo to tout a sex-and-angst thriller dubbed (for pitching's sake) *Last Tango in Tikrit*. They meet financiers, who play along glibly but also make it clear that their decisions are based on box-office forecasting. For a \$50 million-budgeted film, the putative star pairing of Baldwin and Neve Campbell is a non-starter; Campbell, they say, has no marquee value and Baldwin is merely "a TV star".

In parallel with their money chase, our heroes take advice from talents such as Scorsese, Bertolucci and Coppola as well





Roman ruins: Toni Servillo, centre, in Paolo Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty*

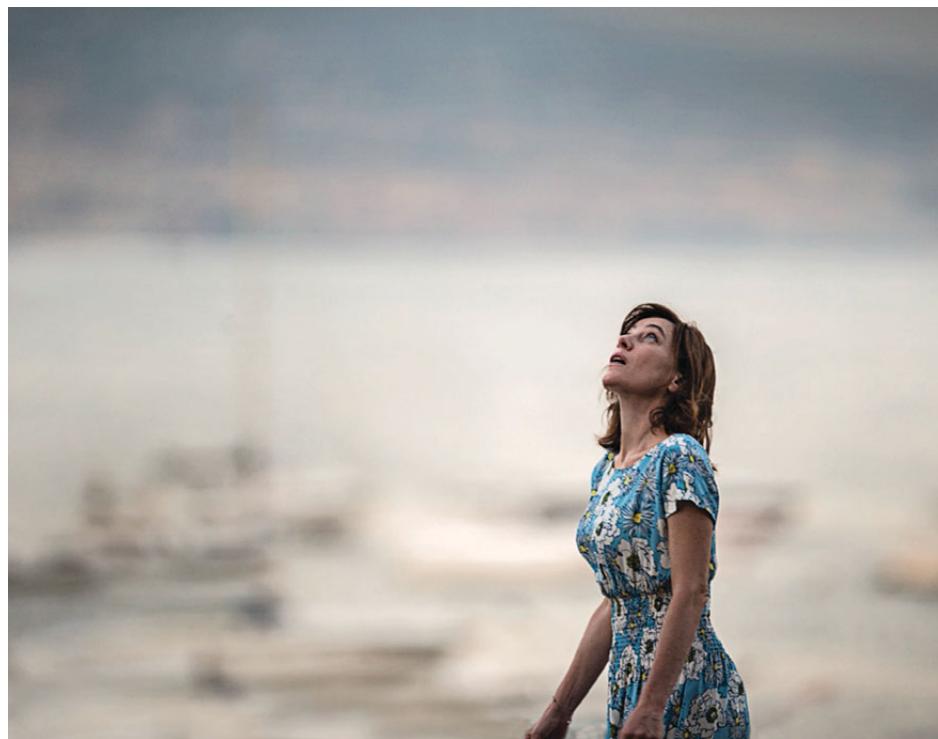
as the more bankable actors they pitch the project to. Ryan Gosling tells a sharp personal anecdote about being a wannabe in LA; Diane Kruger looks extremely nervous at the thought of playing in a sex film with Baldwin; and Jessica Chastain politely glows, but says little. The problem with this film for critics (to whom it defers with a potted history of Cannes, *Cahiers du cinéma*, *Positif* and the *nouvelle vague*) is that we already know this stuff. Yet the sassy exchanges between Toback and Baldwin, the director's fusion of finance-hunting with cinephilia and his insistence on asking every interviewee if they're prepared for death all make it an entertaining ride. You can't help thinking that Toback will still be chasing money in the afterlife.

Touches of class

Where the films mentioned above question wealth by shoving us into its glare, others illustrate the divide between rich and poor by way of adroit contrasts. The most demurely realised of these, **Bends**, is the first feature of Chinese director Flora Lau. It tracks the parallel dilemmas of an indolent, affluent wife (Carina Lau) and her chauffeur (Chen Kun) as she finds her lifestyle under threat and he strives to smuggle his illegally pregnant wife across the border from Shenzhen into Hong Kong, where a second birth is permissible. Shot by Christopher Doyle in an uncharacteristically restrained manner, it's a winningly subtle film of quiet observation and suppressed emotion.

So is Koreeda Hirokazu's **Like Father, Like Son** (*Soshite chichi ni naru*), a film made on a more ambitious scale which poses a parental dilemma that may not seem as imponderable to Westerners: what if you find out the son you have raised to the age of six isn't actually yours but was swapped at birth? Not one anglophone parent I've asked thinks they wouldn't just carry on loving and raising that child. However, the film's two families – one aspirational, the other go-with-the-flow, the first concerned with bloodlines, the second hoping for financial compensation – see it as a legal travesty. Both try to wean the 'wrong' child off their established lives, with a view to swapping them back. Many scenes of soul-searching and poignant encounters unfold, with class differences emerging and inherited character traits biting back at the 'real' parents – particularly the snobbish Ryota (a controlled portrait of status protection from Fukuyama Masaharu). If the last half-hour seems unnecessarily exhaustive and the use of the 'Aria' from Bach's *Goldberg Variations* too flagrant, this is a characteristically slow-burn tearjerker from Koreeda, whose direction of children is always a marvel.

The careful politesse of these films contrasts vividly with the fate of the humble man accidentally caught in a terrifying bind in Amat Escalante's **Heli**. It begins with the eponymous head of the family (Armando Espitia) bloody, bound and gagged in the back of a pick-up truck, seemingly headed for his execution. Flashback shows his teenage daughter love-struck about a dumb soldier, whose idiotic scheme to realise their romantic



Self-absorbed: Valeria Bruni Tedeschi directs and stars in *A Castle in Italy*

Valeria Bruni Tedeschi's semi-autobiographical 'A Castle in Italy' treads a fine line between self-critique and special pleading

dreams leads to violent revenge and torture (the latter includes – look away now – setting fire to genitals). Journalistic consensus in Cannes had it that these scenes would prevent *Heli* from winning anything, yet the jury gave Escalante a well-deserved Best Director prize. For this is a rigorously constructed, painfully evocative film about drug-gang violence, busted hopes and good-natured Mexican passivity getting pushed to breaking point.

Four separate real-life cases of people who reached their own breaking-point and turned to violence were used by Jia Zhangke as the

basis for **A Touch of Sin** (*Tian zhu ding* – which literally translates as 'heaven'), each one a victim of China's massive economic expansion, transformed by Jia's prize-winning script into wuxia or spaghetti-western archetypes. Dahai (Jiang Wu), for instance, evolves from a mining-union official infuriated by his former buddies' enjoyment of the perks of corruption into a rifle-toting equaliser – but not before the gang bosses have him beaten about the head with a spade. Zhou San (Wang Baoqiang) finds satisfaction and relief from the daily grind of responsibility by carrying a firearm and blithely offing anyone he can steal from. Sick of being palmed off with second best by her married lover, a massage-parlour receptionist (Zhao Tao) snaps and resorts to violence.

The final case is sadder still, as a handsome young factory worker (Luo Lanshan) deserts the production line to work as a bus boy in a bizarre hotel brothel and befriends one of the young whores, until he sees her at work. Plotlines interweave and settings shift: from Shanxi province to Chongqing to Dongguan. Blending his usual documentary aptitude for catching street-corner deals and time-killing attitudes with a new-found flair for bloodletting that indicates a close relationship with production company Office Kitano, Jia has made a hard-edged, well-engineered satire of underlying bitterness that enjoys its violent displays coldly while hitting its political targets.

The first-half hour of Alex van Warmerdam's **Borgman** had me excited. Its deliberately absurdist class satire seemed smoothly tuned to purr its way to a telling conclusion. A group of men who live underground are driven away from a wood by a priest and local vigilantes. Their leader – Borgman (Jan Bijvoet), who has strange persuasive powers and resembles the



Bends

young Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull – targets the slick modernist home of Richard (Jeroen Percival) and Marina (Hadewych Minis), and though Richard physically attacks Borgman when he calls asking to use their shower, Marina is soon under his spell. He returns, hair cut and beard trimmed, as the new gardener (having disposed of the old one) and proceeds to rip apart the fabric of the couple's lives using inventive, blackly comic but slightly spurious manoeuvres. Despite his own cool modernist borrowings from Buñuel, Haneke, Pinter and others, van Warmerdam leaves too many enticements unsatisfied, running out of twists well before the film's so-what conclusion.

This was one of several films at the festival in which children suffer life-changing events. But whereas the boys in Clio Barnard's excellent *The Selfish Giant*, the sons in *Like Father, Like Son* and even the daughter of the wronged merchant in the disappointing historical drama *Michael Kohlhaas* are granted the status of people, here they're mere puppets of the revenge on their bourgeois parents.

Thrills, spills and unsympathetic protagonists

The Cannes experience is a subjective one. Jury member Nicole Kidman remarked how unusual it is to watch films at 8.30am and 10.30pm. You could notice too how much better-received films were after the heavy rain gave way to sunshine. I've noted elsewhere that the warmest greeting was for the competition film that followed the biggest disappointment. The 8.30am screening of Nicolas Winding Refn's *Only God Forgives* was catastrophic; that evening's screening of Abdellatif Kechiche's *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* – which I'll come to later – brought the house down. Yet both reactions were mostly justified.

Only God Forgives is as hubristic a film as anyone unsympathetic to Winding Refn's work could wish for, art-directed to death in neon-lit tableaux, structured like the most banal, stripped-down comic-book, yet beholden to *Hamlet* for its few dramatic events. Ryan Gosling plays – if posing mutely can be called ‘playing’ – Julian, the weaker son of Kristin Scott Thomas's drug-racket matriarch Crystal. When his psychotic elder brother Billy rapes



Genetic inheritance: Koreeda Hirokazu's *Like Father, Like Son*

and murders a young prostitute in Bangkok, retired local police martial-arts superman Chang (Vithaya Pansringarm) allows her father to slay Billy. Julian seems ready to avenge Billy in turn, but finds he doesn't have the chops. So Crystal hires hitmen and operatically devised grisly spectacles ensue, aimed to appeal to the sick-boy set. It's an awful film, reeking of misogyny, and my guess is that Refn's partnership with Gosling and chances in Hollywood may both now be freeze-framed.

If you wanted real thrillers, Cannes had some sharp examples. **Omar** – a study of

‘Omar’ is everything a genre film should be: convincingly acted, sure of its world and constantly surprising

resistance and political double-cross from Palestinian director Hany Abu-Assad (*Paradise Now*) – is everything a genre film should be: convincingly acted, sure of its world and constantly surprising. Three friends collude in the shooting of an Israeli soldier, only to find themselves compromised by the military police. Betrayed by one of his pals, Omar (a brilliant Adam Bakri) must prove his continuing loyalty to the cause while fending off the threats of his torturers. The film is like the best episode of *Homeland* you've never seen, except that it's much more convincing. Also praiseworthy was Fabio Grassadonia and Antonio Piazza's **Salvo**, showing in Critics' Week. Here Sicilian mafia hitman Salvo (Saleh Bakri) rubs out an enemy and is about to kill the man's blind sister (Sara Serraiocco) too when she suddenly regains her sight, after which Salvo does his best to hide her. Despite this corny premise, the



Only God Forgives



Omar

 film sticks to a taut, mostly dialogue-free B-movie model of tonal near-perfection. Most chilling of all, however, was Mohammad Rasoulof's **Manuscripts Don't Burn** (*Dast-Neveshtehaa Nemisozand*), in which various dissident Iranian writers are visited by a state-sponsored torture-and-assassination team. We witness both the terror associated with criticising the regime and the banality of the assassins' lives. Mahamat-Saleh Haroun's **Grigris** is less successful. A rubber-limbed dancer-for-hire, whose busted leg is part of his act, Grigris (Souleymane Démé) tries to rescue a local prostitute from her life by stealing from his petrol-smuggler boss. The film didn't live up to its potential to be an African *You Only Live Once* – or to its director's previous work.

In the last issue I suggested that the Coen brothers had become too predictable. Let me retract that right here. **Inside Llewyn Davis**, their spiky, self-mocking, heartfelt study of an also-ran on the 1960s Greenwich Village folk scene, is in their best vein of work. In a wintry New York, Davis (Oscar Isaac) negotiates his guitar-toting itinerancy on a night-by-night basis, seeming to take in his halting stride the news that his embittered ex (Carey Mulligan) is pregnant. But as his descent into obscurity becomes all the more obvious, we get to the roots of his misanthropy. Authentic in its portrayal of the music, with Isaac playing guitar pieces for real (some easily recognisable from a music book I own called *Masters of Instrumental Blues Guitar*), the film also takes time to mock the self-righteous pomposity of the folk scene. And if the structure of the Coens' scripts does tend to certain repetitions, this subtle portrait of a dislikeable protagonist did keep surprising me with its insights and its determination not to redeem him.

Asghar Farhadi's family-disintegration drama **The Past** (*Le Passe*) was one of several films that didn't seem to know how to end. Since the director's last film was the awe-inducing *A Separation*, it was likely that his follow-up would fall short of that film's great achievement, especially when we learned it would be set in Paris. Yet the set-up, the writing and the acting here are initially superb. Bérénice Bejo (who



Manuscripts Don't Burn



Inside Llewyn Davis

won the Best Actress award) plays Marie, a French mother of two who has summoned her estranged Iranian husband Ahmad (Ali Mosaffa) back from Tehran to finalise their divorce. But her decision to have him stay in her house, which she now shares with her new lover (Tahar Rahim), leads to the unravelling of a knot of secrets and lies. It's an intriguing tangle, but one that seems contrived to make Ahmad a saintly judge of Marie's lifestyle.

Just as Winding Refn's film will win revisionist support over the next few months, so already, since its Palme d'Or win, Abdellatif Kechiche's **Blue Is the Warmest Colour** (*La Vie d'Adèle*) has come under fire. Attacks focus on the film's lengthy portrayal of real-looking sexual acts between its two lesbian protagonists – which, it is argued by some (including Julie Maroh, author of the source graphic novel), are shot by Kechiche as if for male delectation. I'll address that shortly, but first I'd like to describe what kind of film it is and why it was so well received. It comes out of the rich tradition of realist French drama about love or infatuation or lust or passion, of which the critical fraternity is generally very indulgent. What's different is that Kechiche holds scenes for far longer than his peers, favours a

Kechiche favours a particularly forensic gaze and demands intensive commitment from his actors

particularly forensic gaze and demands much more intensive commitment from his actors.

For three hours his camera tracks the progress of Adèle (Adèle Exarchopoulos). At first she's a gauche schoolgirl who enjoys erotic fantasies about Emma (Léa Seydoux), a blue-haired woman who passed her in the street; later she becomes a schoolteacher and Emma's live-in lover. Their relationship is not as innocent as some critics have made out. Emma is an experienced habitué of the lesbian scene, who seems quick to discard her long-term girlfriend as soon as she's met Adèle (though time-jumps skip the how and when). Though we're sure Adèle is deep in thrall to her, there's a distinct possibility that Emma is only in it for the sex. But then the film is explicitly from Adèle's point of view, and her passion is what overwhelms the viewer – or at least those who are prepared to go with it.

To me the sex seems as convincing as it needs to be. Sure, the actresses are gorgeous, as few humans are, and Kechiche's camera seems bewitched by Exarchopoulos's mouth. But it's the rapture that convinces me, not the orgasms. Yes, the film has been slightly over-hyped; but no, I don't think it's in any way reprehensible. For me, along with the films of the Coens, Sorrentino, Abu-Assad and Lav Diaz (see p.28), it was one of the best films of a very good Cannes line-up indeed. 

Only God Forgives is released in the UK on 2 August, and will be reviewed in the next issue. **Inside Llewyn Davis** is released in the UK on 24 January 2014



Blue movie: Palme d'Or-winner *Blue Is the Warmest Colour*



The Past

CLIO BARNARD'S CANNES DIARY

The director of *The Selfish Giant*, which won the prize for the best film in Directors' Fortnight, on what a Cannes success feels like



Thursday

Once upon a time I made a promise to myself: I wouldn't go to Cannes unless I had a film there – fully accepting that this

could mean I'd never go. (Following this same logic I will never go to Wembley, Wimbledon, Glastonbury – the list is long.) Film festivals can be overwhelming, overstimulating, brilliant but intense, inspiring but exhausting. So my strategy is to go with my blinders (rhymes with cinders) on – what the Bradford boys call blinkers – and focus on the film.

I'm thrilled to see Conner [Chapman], 13, and Shaun [Thomas], 15, the two lead actors from my film *The Selfish Giant*. They arrive with their mums, Rio and Lisa. Lots of hugging and excitement. It's pouring with rain – though it's nothing on the driving Bradford rain we shot in. My first impression is that Cannes is laidback and easy, not the glitzy madness I'd expected. It's a small French town with white tents along the beach. Marquees and rain – it's like the Lambeth Country Show in Brixton. I keep expecting to walk into a tent and see a cauliflower sheep or a cucumber crocodile.

Friday

At a Q&A after the morning press screening, the questions are great. "It's like a Greek tragedy." "The selfish giant of the title is capitalism." Conner and Shaun are very shy and can't be persuaded to talk, but you can feel the warmth towards them from the audience. Afterwards we go back to their hotel and do interviews and photos. Doing press is fascinating – I begin to understand how people are responding to the film.

At a BFI lunch I meet Mark Cousins – our films premiere at the same time. *The Story of Film* was incredible and I feel sure his new film (*A Story of Children and Film*) will be too – I'm frustrated that I have to wait to see it. The familiarity of his lilting voice is reassuring.

Meanwhile reviews of *The Selfish Giant* start to trickle through. I don't get a chance to read them because I'm doing press. I'm told five stars from *The Telegraph*, four from *The Guardian*. [The film's] editor Nick Fenton tells me the critic's words reflect our months of discussions in the cutting room. We couldn't know whether what we hoped to communicate would come across – it's hard not knowing – so I'm incredibly happy to hear this.

I go back to the apartment to get changed – I wear a dress I borrowed from designer/body sculptor/genius Hussein Chalayan. Producer Tracy O'Riordan and I walk down to a pre-premiere reception at the Quinzaine. The boys look gorgeous in their suits, Rio and Lisa look beautiful. There is champagne



Yorkshire terrier: Conner Chapman in Clio Barnard's Cannes success *The Selfish Giant*

Conner and Shaun are very shy and can't be persuaded to talk, but you can feel the warmth towards them from the audience

but I'm too nervous to drink. The sun is shining. We take pictures, try to chat.

Waiting outside the auditorium – butterflies – but being there with the boys and Tracy makes it easier. Up onto the stage – intro – Tracy reads out a lovely statement in French. We sit and the film begins.

When my first feature *The Arbor* premiered [in 2010] I shook all the way through – the only way to stop myself was to look at the reflection of the film in the shiny floor. This time it's easier because I am with the boys. I focus on the French subtitles, how the swear words translate. I can sense the audience – it's thrilling to hear them laugh, gasp, jolt with shock. Towards the end they become very quiet, intimate and private – harder to read.

Then: applause. A spotlight. Dazzled. Someone gestures that we should stand. Tracy, Conner, Shaun and I stand up. Someone gestures we should turn round. I look around – people simultaneously smiling and crying. Rio, Shaun's mum, is crying – I hold her. Tears flow down Lisa's cheeks. I stand with them and watch their boys, expressions changing from wide-eyed awe to broad smiles. A group of kids crowd round them asking for autographs and taking photos. No film is easy to make and there were many struggles and lots of doubts – so to arrive at this point is powerful.

Afterwards my friend Kate Ogborn embraces me. "Promise me you will always follow your instincts." Meanwhile Conner and Shaun get mobbed – Shaun says someone was even filming him eating his burger. Those of us left standing in the small hours go down to the beach and into the sea which is warm

despite the rain. Nick gets stung by a jellyfish – where's Nicole Kidman when you need her?

Saturday

Rain all day. Conner, Shaun and I do interviews all morning. They leave for the airport. A lunch at the Quinzaine tent – rain beating down on the canvas, waves crashing on the beach. I love the wildness of the weather and the comradeship of being with my teammates. Then more interviews – a Q&A in the evening. I'm all talked out. A friend takes me to a tent where Mark Ronson is DJing and we dance.

Sunday

Early out the door for Paul Wright's *For Those in Peril*, which rouses the grief monster in me. I meet a friend for breakfast and have a Cannes meltdown. At the root of Paul Wright's film is grief, and grief is at the root of my film too. Attachment. Separation. Loss. Mothers and sons. *Don't believe in fairytales*.

Kate just happens to walk by at that moment – she and my breakfast pal galvanise me. Then a panel discussion at the red-carpet end of town. Another tent. Nick has gone home and [cinematographer] Robbie Ryan's Dad is now masquerading as Nick despite the generation gap. I'm tempted to get him to talk about the editing process.

At a screening of Anthony Chen's *Ilo Ilo*, the projection stops three times because of a power cut. It's testament to its strength that these pauses don't stop the audience engaging with this nuanced, understated, funny film. A standing ovation, actors wiping away tears. Shot, reverse shot.

Step into BFI party before going home – glad to have an opportunity to tell Paul Wright his film uprooted me, and to hear Mark Cousins's voice again before I leave. As I fly home my friend Andrew Kötting arrives by swan pedalo. We will have to walk together on the beach at Camber instead of in Cannes. **S**

BEAUTY AND DREAD



Dazzling: Alain Guiraudie's *Stranger by the Lake*

This year's festival saw films from France and the Far East stealing the thunder of higher-profile American entries

By Kieron Corless

This year more than ever the Cannes competition line-up seemed to suggest that France and America are where things are happening right now – opening and closing films included, 16 of the 22 entries were financed and produced in those two countries. But Abdellatif Kechiche's Palme d'Or-winner aside (see p.24), for me that proposal didn't stand up to scrutiny. With the exception of Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive*, the American fare proved a succession of conventionally laid out, fitfully involving period dramas. The French films were generally more alive to and engaged with the present, readier to take a few risks (the Kechiche the most stunning example). But titles that might have looked promising on paper – Arnaud Desplechin's *Jimmy P.* (*Psychotherapy of a Plains Indian*), Arnaud des Pallières's *Michael Kohlhaas*, Iranian Asghar Farhadi's French-produced and set *The Past* (see p.24) – didn't live too long in the memory.

With the exception of three French titles I'll get to shortly, the same pattern was repeated in other festival strands, where new work by Serge Bozon, Sofia Coppola and others didn't light many fires either. In fact, several of the finest films were Asian, two of which – Koreeda Hirozaku's *Like Father, Like Son* and Jia Zhangke's *A Touch of Sin* – I've already written about on the *S&S* website. My abiding impression

was of a festival somewhat hemmed in by its status as the number-one commodity-spectacle, the maintenance of which requires

an abundant supply of American and local star actors to feed a ravenous media – sometimes to the detriment of overall quality levels.

To put it another way, despite the festival's avowed dedication to auteurs, performance will occasionally assume pre-eminence, so ordinary films can still seemingly get the nod if there's a recognised actor giving it his or her best shot. I'd say that was the case with Paolo Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty* (starring the excellent Toni Servillo, see p.20) and the Desplechin and des Pallières (with Benicio del Toro and Mads Mikkelsen, respectively). Or there were clichéd performances in average films such as James Gray's *The Immigrant*, another smoothly mounted exercise in burnished angst and claustrophobia (see p.28). Or there were terrible performances in truly awful films, such as Ryan Gosling drifting vacantly through Nicolas Winding Refn's equally vacant *Only God Forgives* (see p.23).

Two of the best films I saw were French-produced documentary antidotes to these starry mixed blessings. Claude Lanzmann's *The Last of the Unjust* (*Le Dernier des injustes*) was another of his painstaking excavations of memories of the Holocaust, the fulcrum of which is a riveting interview carried out in the mid-1970s with a charismatic former Jewish elder placed in charge of the Nazis' so-called model camp at Theresienstadt. Gradually a complex portrait emerges of an individual placed in an impossible historical situation – a miraculous survivor left suspended between self-criticism and self-exculpation. Rithy Panh's *The Missing Picture* (*L'Image manquante*) tells the story of his family and country's obliteration by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, using carved wooden figures

MY CANNES TOP TEN

1. **Norte, The End of History** Lav Diaz
2. **Stranger by the Lake** Alain Guiraudie
3. **The Last of the Unjust** Claude Lanzmann
4. **A Touch of Sin** (below) Jia Zhangke
5. **Blue Is the Warmest Colour** Abdellatif Kechiche
6. **The Missing Picture** Rithy Panh
7. **Like Father, Like Son** Koreeda Hirozaku
8. **Grigris** Mahamat-Saleh Haroun
9. **Bastards** Claire Denis
10. **The Great Beauty** Paolo Sorrentino





The Last of the Unjust



The Missing Picture



Bastards

to stand in for the people who were murdered and the archive images that could never have been filmed. The technique proves to be a triumphant assertion of memory and creativity over a regime that attempted to destroy both.

Early on in the festival, critic Robert Koehler launched a spiky tweet salvo at the conservatism of the films and programming; this reflected my own view – although things did improve thereafter. But I disagreed with Koehler and others who pointed to the cubist narrative of Claire Denis's **Bastards** (*Les Salauds*) in *Un Certain Regard* as an exciting anomaly. For me this putative psychosexual revenge drama fell some way short of Denis's most fragmented film *The Intruder*; it seemed sluggish where the earlier film is mightily charged up. Vincent Lindon stars as a sailor trying to negotiate the noirish moral murk after his sister's husband kills himself and their daughter goes off the rails. You can see what Denis is trying to do, but the experience is like listening to a not

'The Missing Picture' tells the story of Cambodia's obliteration using carved wooden figures to stand in for the murdered

quite properly tuned piano. The collision of its different elements never generates enough friction or heat, nor does the not quite believable romance. Lindon's character becomes progressively less interesting, while the ending seems to betray a lack of confidence in the material, spelling out what we've already surmised, despite the awkward narrative opacity up to that point. It feels like a rare misfire for an often brilliant director.

During the tenure of Olivier Père (2004-09), the Directors' Fortnight was where you'd head for an alternative vision of cinema; on the admittedly patchy evidence I gathered this year, that role seems to have dissipated. The highlight was Alejandro Jodorowsky's first film in more than 20 years, **The Dance of Reality** (*La danza de la realidad*), an autobiographical fantasia in the Fellini mould, crammed to overflowing with imaginative flights and humorous and nostalgic moments. It was fun but way too long and let down by poor image quality, presumably due to a very low budget. Worthwhile too was Clio Barnard's *The Selfish Giant*, which I've also written about online.

In general *Un Certain Regard* was where the best films could be found this year, including Alain Guiraudie's astonishing **Stranger by the Lake** (*L'Inconnu du lac*), which ought to have been in competition. The film makes magnificent use of the various parts of what is effectively just one gay-cruising lakeside location – woods, lake, shore, car park. One habitué takes a shine to another, but secretly witnesses him drowning his current lover in the lake (the most riveting scene I saw in the whole festival). Lust and curiosity overcome fear as he's gradually drawn into a relationship with the



 murderer, just as a police investigation gets underway. There's an almost pagan feel to the film's crystalline images, its evocation of summer heat and desiring, devouring glances and bodies, its mixture of beauty and dread (the mythical dangerous fish in the lake). Casting, performances and script are all pitch-perfect as well.

Numerous other films in the festival gave warning of the effects of our precarious late-capitalist state of affairs, environmental and personal, but none I saw was as subtle and understated as Guiraudie's. Its stark figuring of a death drive – a desire that will ultimately be extremely bad for you and others – was the clearest expression of a political dilemma we all face. Viewed in that light, the ending was the most brilliantly poised I've seen for ages.

The best film I saw at Cannes, however, was Lav Diaz's *Norte, The End of History* (*Norte, hangganan ng kasaysayan*). The 15th film from the Filipino director, it grapples with big abstract themes – justice, the nature of evil, guilt, fate, love – but keeps them firmly rooted in the concrete particulars of Philippine society. A drop-out law student grows ever more twisted in his take on life, airing political views that could be construed as fascist and deliberately alienating friends and family. Another man, decent and simple, seems incapable of providing for his impoverished family. When the student murders the pawnbroker who lends them both money, as well as her daughter, the other man is mistakenly jailed for the crime.

There are clear nods to Dostoevsky, but the student's descent into ever more horrific depths is only one element, beautifully counterpointed with the imprisoned man's spiritual awakening, his wife's struggle to cope without him, and their continued love for each other despite the hand they've been dealt. The episodic, unpredictable narrative proceeds by way of a series of stunning long takes, all perfectly choreographed visually and spatially.

It's a mesmerising experience that grows deeper and broader the longer it goes on, completely justifying its four-hour duration. It seems to be pitched in a completely different key to the other films I saw in Cannes this year, with its own rhythm and rules, a different mode of address to the viewer, the ambition to reach for – and attain – a metaphysical dimension. ☀



Norte, The End of History

CANNES

HISTORY MEN

The Great Gatsby wasn't the only film in Cannes this year to present a wry angle on America's not so distant past

By Geoff Andrew

Several films in this year's main competition followed *The Great Gatsby* by dealing in some way with 20th-century America. Nick James writes elsewhere about the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis* (p.24), but it's worth noting that all the competing American directors reflected on their country's not so distant past. Even one apparent exception – Jim Jarmusch – sets his vampire pic

Only Lovers Left Alive partly in Detroit, an emblematic, ailing city with its own special 20th-century ghosts. It's a fitting milieu (the other is Tangier) for this funny, stylish variation on the genre, with Brits Tom Hiddleston and Tilda Swinton perfectly cast as the blood-quaffing boho protagonists who – with Jarmusch's characteristically dry, faintly melancholy wit – reflect on the deadly march of time and how much of the world (especially Los Angeles!) is controlled by "zombies".

If Jarmusch's expressive mode is primarily metaphorical, James Gray's *The Immigrant*, Steven Soderbergh's *Behind the Candelabra* and Alexander Payne's *Nebraska* provide a more naturalistic, specifically American take on the past. Gray's handsome but listless tale of Ewa (Marion Cotillard), a young Pole who arrives at Ellis Island in 1921 only to fall into the clutches of a smitten pimp (Joaquin Phoenix), offers little we haven't seen in other films about New York at that time. The script hovers repeatedly around a few themes without ever coming in for the kill, and a last-act lurch into

Nebraska' paints an affectionate but ambivalent portrait of traditional American notions of family

violent melodrama isn't enlivening enough to stop this from seeming like a half-completed sketch for a more substantial movie.

Soderbergh's Liberace picture *Behind the Candelabra* does the opposite. You might expect a film about a pianist who prided himself on his populist appeal, flamboyant appearance and earning capacity to be a superficial wallow in all things camp – even a freakshow. But Richard LaGravenese's script, Soderbergh's lucid direction and the very fine acting by Michael Douglas and Matt Damon as the entertainer and his lover ensure that *Behind the Candelabra* is both very amusing (albeit not cruelly so at the characters' expense) and, in its understated way, quite touching. Chronicling the last decade of Liberace's life, this account of celebrity, power and excessive wealth damaging both self-awareness and a loving relationship offers an incisive commentary on the American dream



Nebraska



The Immigrant

that looks back to Welles's preoccupations in *Citizen Kane* and forward to the present: the late 1970s and early 80s were merely a foretaste of the world we inhabit today.

Unlike the other titles mentioned, Payne's *Nebraska* has a contemporary setting. It charts a trip from Billings, Montana to Lincoln, Nebraska taken by Woody Grant (Bruce Dern), an irascible, forgetful and confused old boozer whose delusional belief that he's won a million dollars provokes his son (Will Forte) to drive him several hundred miles to allow him to see his birthplace and his estranged folks one last time. But since, as the movie proceeds, we gradually learn from his family, friends and foes how the young Woody turned into a senile grouch, the film's concern is very much with the past. Moreover, as it's shot in black and white 'Scope in a small-town Midwest which itself evokes the first half of the last century, it paints an affectionate but highly ambivalent portrait of traditional American notions of community and family.

Sweet and sour, bitingly funny and undeniably sad, *Nebraska* is neither maudlin celebration nor satirical critique of the hokey culture it depicts; carefully situated somewhere between those viewpoints, it's considerably subtler than that. And in Dern's prize-winning performance, Payne has a pitch-perfect instrument to voice his rich, mixed feelings about the world he himself grew up in. Laconic, unsentimental, hanging on in there, Dern's Woody is as truthful and compellingly watchable a creation as Douglas's Liberace. ☀

 *Behind the Candelabra*, now on release in the UK, is one of our Films of the Month on page 62

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PASSING THROUGH

Reuniting Celine and Jesse after their tantalising encounters in 'Before Sunrise' and 'Before Sunset', 'Before Midnight' completes a unique portrait of a relationship. Or will they be back, wonders director Richard Linklater

By Philip Horne

Richard Linklater is probably still best known for his early-90s films *Slacker* and *Dazed and Confused*, though *School of Rock* (2003) with Jack Black showed him capable of a broader vein of pleasurable comedy. The beautiful, mournful, mesmeric dream-movie *Waking Life* (2001) turned live action into graphic art through 'Rotoscoping' – a technique he revisited for the darkly delightful Philip K. Dick adaptation *A Scanner Darkly* (2006). His versatility has seemingly made it hard for critics to identify his strengths – as recently shown by the remarkable true-crime East Texas black comedy *Bernie*, which was made in 2011 but only just released in the UK. (It's appreciatively reviewed by Andrew Tracy in May's S&S.)

The wise, ironic, more philosophical Linklater is on display again with his new film *Before Midnight*, which turns the magical diptych of *Before Sunrise* (1995) and *Before Sunset* (2004) into a triptych by taking up the characters of Jesse (Ethan Hawke) and Celine (Julie Delpy) after a second nine-year gap – this time as fortysomethings in Greece (after Vienna and Paris in the first two). All the films, which are co-written by the director and his two leads, concern the quest for true communication, real intimacy between people – and the obstacles to sustaining it, above all the passage of time. Transience and loss loom large in *Before Midnight*: "We are just passing through," says a grieving widow in a long,





THE NINE-YEAR ITCH
Before Midnight finds
Celine (Julie Delpy) and
Jesse (Ethan Hawke)
together nine years after
their second meeting in Paris
in *Before Sunset*

 bittersweet lunch scene here. Jesse is so moved he proposes a toast: "To passing through."

Time's damage was already a focus in the first film, which contained the seeds – looking ahead – of its successors: mid-twenties, Jesse speculated, "If we got married, after a few years you'd hate a lot of my mannerisms." Parting at the end of *Sunrise*, the young lovers agreed to meet in Vienna in six months; in *Sunset*, they finally met again; now, we find they've been together – though unmarried – ever since. We meet them in a beautiful corner of the Peloponnese, surrounded by ancient ruins and lunching al fresco in a villa perched above the blue sea.

But it's not happily ever after; this bumpy ride doesn't carry us into the world of romcom (some of Jesse's mannerisms do irritate Celine). Their holiday is coming to an end, reality is pressing in again. It may be pastoral, the kind of idyllic interlude that allows us to step aside, face truths and reassess values – but it's serious pastoral, as in Eric Rohmer's beach movies. Nor are we in the thrillingly exotic, atavistic world of Michael Cacoyannis's *Zorba the Greek* (1964) – a film shot by Walter Lassally, who at the age of 85 makes a very impressive acting debut in Linklater's film, playing a grand old man of letters. The friendly Greeks in *Before Midnight* are just as modern as Jesse and Celine.

In advance it seemed it would be hard to match the excitement of the superb, very moving *Before Sunset* – a grown-up film for sensitive, decent, complicated people. But Linklater is not one to take it easy; though highly enjoyable, *Before Midnight* is in some ways a deepening – it sets us challenges with its long takes, moral confusions, grating emotions and smouldering, believable problems of the kind romance tends to set aside. All these rich films about how to live refuse to offer simple answers – in the spirit of the great literary critic William Empson, who noted, "Life involves maintaining oneself between contradictions that can't be solved by analysis."

Thus we start with the consequences of the previous film's ending – the breakup of Jesse's marriage. He's saying a wrenching goodbye at the airport to Hank (Seamus Davey-Fitzpatrick), the son he loves. Jesse and Celine have had two lovely daughters together, but feel "we are shitty parents"; he's quite a successful novelist, but she resents his success and being made a character in his fiction. There's a sour tone to this battle of the sexes – jokes tend to have a bitter edge: "I'm kidding, and I'm not," says Celine after an especially bleak remark. Guilt, age, death, post-natal depression, political pessimism ("The world is fucked") all figure in this sun-drenched tale. Declarations of love come as accusations: "I fucked up my entire life because of the way you sing."

There could be tragic or comic readings of what happens in the film: this is the seed of the end of their great love (tragic); or, everyone has quarrels and misunderstandings, and when they clear them up through wise humour, their relationships are truer (comic). It's kept ambiguous: near the end an ambivalent, possibly sardonic note is struck: "If you want true love, this is it." They visit the tiny old chapel of St Odilia, patron saint of eyesight, but we can't tell at the end whether their clear view of each other is restored – or whether indeed love itself depends on delusion.

In person, Richard Linklater's musing, generous, unflappable, often droll style of conversation makes it clear



PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAEME ROBERTSON/EYEVINE

where the tone of these films comes from. Perhaps appropriately, given that early in *Before Midnight* Celine has a mobile-phone conversation in the car, the director spoke to me by phone while being driven to JFK, shortly before the film opened in the US.

Philip Horne: Why Greece?

Richard Linklater: On these films the location is one of the last things we incorporate. We really just focused on what Jesse and Celine had been doing for nine years, where they find themselves in life and what we want to cover: we spend a few years gestating that. Once we decided they lived in Paris and were on holiday somewhere, I visited Greece – only about three months before we started shooting. I was looking for the writer's house and we found Patrick Leigh-Fermor's house at Kardamyli, a little town. The ancientness of it – very different from the first two, that were very city-based – added something to their little ancient paradise they find themselves in at the beginning.

That was our metaphor: that Jesse and Celine find themselves in some kind of paradisiacal situation. Nine years ago, they would have signed up for where they are, probably – two beautiful daughters, each other, careers going fine. And yet it's still tough to negotiate that space between two people, however much you love one another.

PH: Celine talks about having been moved by a film when she's young – Rossellini's *Journey to Italy*, though she doesn't name it. It's a wonderful film, but slightly ominous for their relationship.

RL: It's funny, she talks about seeing it as a teenager, and all she remembers is in intimate terms, of the families who were buried in Pompeii. [laughs] She would see that film very differently now, through her 41-year-old eyes.

It's the hardest thing actors can do: to not even act, just to be – to exist in a very realistic way

Richard Linklater

But yes, for people who know that film, that's one of the greatest dissolution-of-a-relationship movies ever made.

PH: Journey to Italy does have a kind of miraculous reunion at the end. [See Endings, p.112]

RL: You believe it? I don't believe it. Knowing Rossellini and Bergman were over by then...

PH: Since Slacker, you've been known for your moving camera. Do you have any thoughts on the differences between handheld camera and Steadicam?

RL: I think walk-and-talks with Steadicam have always worked pretty well. I didn't really want anything to feel handheld. So much of what I'm doing is trying to create that reality; whatever seems the least obtrusive and draws the least amount of attention to itself is my first choice. The long scene in the car was just hood-mounting the camera – you can't really get much simpler than that. It's funny: for Ethan and Julie, their job is to act so natural but in front of them at all times, whether they're walking or in the car, there's the huge apparatus of a film production going on – lights, crew, little panics, technical problems. It's the hardest thing actors can do: to not even *act*, just to *be* – to exist in a very realistic way. That's the hardest thing. It sure requires the most rehearsal.

PH: The car scene in this film is 14 minutes – compared to an eight-minute one in the previous film...

RL: Each film has featured some pretty lengthy takes. But that's the challenge. Especially at the beginning of this movie, I wanted an audience member, particularly if you've seen the other films, to get kind of a bonus – to just feel like you're being dropped into the reality of Celine and Jesse's lives – and either consciously or unconsciously the long take kind of makes it real, even though obviously it's a construct. And I like the idea of just being able to luxuriate, to look at either Jesse or Celine – of just not letting film syntax lead you toward either one of them. So you are just in the car with them.

That scene sets up everything that comes next, every little nuance: the fight, and whatever goes on between them, and the backstory, and so much. No one could ever remotely improvise something like that.

PH: In Before Sunrise, Jesse talks about a Quaker wedding where "after an hour of staring into each other's eyes, they're married". It made me think how few scenes there are in these films where they're not talking; but those there are seem very charged.

RL: Yes, these silent moments were built into all the movies. As much talking as there is, there are all these – hopefully poignant – silences. In the second movie it's them walking up the stairway when they're going up to her apartment.

PH: How has the writing process evolved on these movies?

RL: The first film was somewhat conventional in that I had a script before I cast two young actors, but the working method was always going to be to get the two most creative actors I could find who would spin on it and give of themselves to the film. We rewrote the script together, and really found a lot of moments to make that film work.

It was a big challenge – we were all getting to know each other then – but it was special. That was what led us to want to work together again – and the fact that Jesse and Celine felt pretty real to the three of us. The fact that they keep popping up their heads every six or seven years after a film – maybe they have something



FAMILY SNAPS
From top: Jesse says goodbye to his son (Seamus Davey-Fitzpatrick); the 14-minute car scene; Celine with her daughters in Greece. Opposite: Richard Linklater



 to say about this new station in life? It's happened twice now but I have no idea what could be that could ever happen again.

PH: One grim possibility raised in *Before Midnight* is that one of them might die and then the other one would be left.

RL: I think they always talk about that. There is a certain morbidity that runs through their thinking.

PH: The first film was a romantic comedy, kind of, but this new one isn't really, is it?

RL: Well, this one is pretty funny, actually, if you see it with a bigger audience. The laughter in the movie builds, and by the hotel-room scene it's a true comedy. As the characters become more miserable within the film, the film gets funnier, strangely. [laughs] It's a really perverse dynamic with the audience. Other people's misery has always been kind of fun to watch on film.

Hold on a second, I'm getting out of my car now. On this call we've gone from Manhattan all the way to JFK. [laughs] But we can continue talking...

PH: OK, but I don't want you to miss your flight! These three films feel quite French-influenced to me. You've mentioned Truffaut's Antoine Doinel films as a model, following a character getting older as the actor [Jean-Pierre Léaud] ages over 20 years.

RL: That's one of the few precedents – Ray's *Apu* trilogy maybe... So it's pretty good company.

PH: The style of the films makes me think more of Eric Rohmer – like *The Aviator's Wife* (1981), where there's that long section where the hero and the young girl wander through Paris.

RL: That was the first Rohmer film I saw, back when it was new.

PH: The one I kept remembering in *Before Midnight* was *The Green Ray* (1986), a holiday film with a long lunch, and a couple watching the sunset.

RL: Oh yeah! The girl's on holiday and there's an outdoor lunch where she's not eating meat – she's a vegetarian, I remember, which freaks everybody at the table out. [laughs] I love that movie. Yeah! They catch the last ray of light. Which I've done in my life. I saw the green ray once – a green flash. The end of that film is beautiful.

I love that actress, Marie Rivière. There's a later Rohmer film, *A Winter's Tale* (1992), where she shows up on a bus or something. With Rohmer I sometimes forget the exact plots, but I just remember the feeling of all of them. But you see her and you think, "Oh, she's aged." It's kind of like this movie: boom! You get a nine-year jump and how people look different! They're the same, but they're different – like all of us.

 *Before Midnight* is released in the UK on 21 June and is reviewed on page 71

Celine and Jesse felt pretty real to the three of us. They keep popping up their heads every six or seven years after a film – maybe they have something to say about this new station in life?

EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS
Clockwise from top left:
Before Sunrise, *Before Sunset*, *Before Midnight*,
Journey to Italy, *The Aviator's Wife*, *The Green Ray*



The PARADE
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A FILM BY SRDJAN DRAGOJEVIC
DVD VIDEO
MPREGS
15
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Grand Jury Prize - Best Feature
Grand Jury Prize - Best Director
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Grand Jury Prize - Best Story
Grand Jury Prize - Best Actor
15
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BUILD MY GALLOWS HIGH

In Joshua Oppenheimer's *'The Act of Killing'*, the perpetrators of the massacres of millions of alleged communists in mid-1960s Indonesia re-enact their crimes – with extraordinary results

By Nick Bradshaw



There's a strain of fiction we might call 'political nightmare', which decants the demons of history into an alternate present over which they have secured dominion: think of the Nazi empires of Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, Kevin Brownlow's *It Happened Here* or Robert Harris's *Fatherland*.

Three thoughts arise: first, the truism that history is written (and filmed) by the winners; second, that revising recent history is in a sense a battle to change its outcomes – those whose official histories are threatened are surely ceding sway; and third, that there may yet be regimes in this world that both deserve and resist depiction as the stuff of political nightmares. Of course there are, from North Korea to various former Soviet republics, Saudi Arabia and points beyond. The problem is that in the real world, nightmare regimes rarely lend themselves to scrutiny.

One of the distinctions that makes Joshua Oppenheimer's unorthodox, improbable documentary *The Act of Killing* so groundbreaking is that it films past atrocities and their stains on the present with the full, unchastened collaboration of the perpetrators. In that these perpetrators are still in power and under no pressure to confess their crimes, this is nigh on unprecedented. What's equally remarkable is the way in which the film achieves this: not merely through spoken reflection and unabashed admission but through keen cinematic re-enactments and metaphoric flights of fancy which open up the killers' own imaginations. Braggers, pop-movie buffs, family men with a sense of duty to record their deeds for posterity – and, perhaps, tormented souls – they restage their contributions to genocide as scenes from gangster dramas, war movies and rococo musicals, as well as realistic scenes of pillage and torture involving non-professional extras cajoled into (re)playing the parts of victims. Then they screen the results at home to their children, and promote them on television chat-shows.

It's hard to hush up entirely the deaths of something between half a million and 2.5 million people. Inside Indonesia, as *The Act of Killing* demonstrates, that feat has been accomplished by a mix of propaganda and fear: not only did General Suharto, the leader of the anti-communist coup in 1965 and ringleader of the following year's bloody purges, maintain personal dictatorial rule until 1998, but the army collaborators, militia men and mobsters who conducted the murders continue to enjoy the power that has been their reward. (Asked on TV why 2.5 million victims' children don't take revenge on their killers, the head of the paramilitary Pancasila Youth group boasts, "Because we'll crush them all" – to the applause of the audience.)

Outside, in the West, the killings have never attained

widespread notoriety, perhaps because they were conducted with our governments' encouragement; when the murder rate slowed for want of weapons, we hurried over more. Before its decimation, the Communist Party of Indonesia, which played by the ballot box, was the largest non-ruling communist party in the world. The documentary *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* (1992) demonstrates the gaping difference in column inches between reports of genocide in anti-communist Indonesia and in communist Cambodia the following decade. If Western filmgoers are remotely aware of events in Indonesia in 1965, it's probably via Peter Weir's feature *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982) – a film set in the build-up to Suharto's coup, which jumps plane as the killings ramp up.

"GOD HATES COMMUNISTS. THAT'S WHY HE MADE THIS FILM SO BEAUTIFUL"

Oppenheimer, who had previously gained some acclaim for his 1996 'fictional documentary' *The Entire History of the Louisiana Purchase*, and his co-director Christine Lynn came to North Sumatra at the turn of the 21st century to make *The Globalization Tapes* (2003) in concert with unionised plantation workers. But how to depict the problems of low-paid, unprotected labour without confronting the intimidating culture of coercion in which they lived? He began trying to film with survivors of the massacres, documenting their memories of the horrors. But "every time we tried to film together we would be arrested and stopped," he remembers. "Finally the human-rights community – and the survivors themselves – said, 'Film the killers, they'll talk. And not just talk, they'll boast. And the audience will see at once why we're so afraid, and taste a little bit the nature of this regime.'"

And so it transpired. "All the people I filmed, within minutes, volunteered not just to tell me



READY FOR HIS CLOSE-UP

Left: in a scene from *The Act of Killing*, self-confessed murderer Anwar Congo, on the right, is made up for a torture re-enactment. **Above:** Joshua Oppenheimer filming on the streets of Medan

 what they'd done but to take me to the places where they killed, show me how they did it, bring along machetes to use as props, bring along friends to play their victims," Oppenheimer recalls. "At the start I was primarily trying to understand what happened in 1965. Swiftly I started to ask myself, 'What is going on now?' – that these men thought it was appropriate to dramatise what they'd done, even in rudimentary re-enactments." He tells of one killer who, in February 2004, took him to the riverside where, night after night in the 1960s, he used to cut off the heads of busloads of victims – and who then insisted on posing for photos with Oppenheimer making thumbs-up and V-for-victory signs. Shortly afterwards, the filmmaker was struck by similar poses in photos of American soldiers emerging from Abu Ghraib.

The director is adamant that he met the killers' openness with his own – that there was no "inveigling" or deception on his part. "The whole method was a response to their openness, an attempt to understand why are they so open, and what is achieved for them through this openness? What are they doing by boasting?" he recalls. "I would say to them, 'Look, you've been involved in one of the biggest mass killings in human history, your whole society is based on it and your lives are totally shaped by it. You evidently want to show me what you've done and tell me about it. Show me, in whatever way you wish. I will film it and the process of your planning the re-enactments and combine them into maybe a new form of documentary' – I did not yet know it would become so surreal and stylised – 'but a new form of documentary that combines re-enactment with its preparation as a way of showing what these events mean to you and your society; a kind of documentary of the imagination rather than a documentary of everyday life.'"

Grilled on what precedents he had in mind (I wonder about Rithy Panh's *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* and Rob Lemkin and Thet Sambath's *Enemies of the People*, both of which feature confrontations and re-enactments of sorts with Khmer Rouge killers), Oppenheimer directs me instead to an eclectic lineage of "documentaries of the imagination": Kidlat Tahimik's *Perfumed Nightmare*, Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Mysterious Object at Noon*, Werner Herzog's *Even Dwarves Started Small* ("a weird example... improvisation is the delirium of that movie") and the films of *cinéma vérité* ethnographer Jean Rouch, who "understood that every time you film anybody you're creating a reality".

"*S21* was a milestone and I admire Rithy Panh's work in general, but that was more of a contrast," he says. "Normally when you hear from perpetrators they've been removed from power and their acts declared criminal, so they either deny what they've done or they apologise for it. Because the killers [in *The Act of Killing*] have won and remained in power, the whole film is an attempt to understand the imagination of a regime of impunity – and what happens to our humanity when we build our normality on terror and lies, and use storytelling to deny the most awful parts of our reality, not to see it for what it is."

"It's a great pity that in the Anglophone world we conflate *cinéma vérité* and Direct Cinema," he continues. "*Cinéma vérité* was all about giving people the space to perform on camera, to imagine, to stage themselves as a way of documenting how they see themselves and make

sense of their world. It's trying to do something fundamentally more profound. Direct Cinema tries to be insightful by looking at reality in a very close way, while in fact much more is staged than we like to think. In *cinéma vérité* it's about trying to make something invisible visible – the role of fantasy and imagination in everyday life."

"PEACE! HAPPINESS! SMILE!"

Oppenheimer wasn't the only cinephile at work on the film. You can understand how he fell in with his chief protagonist Anwar Congo, a man who's now a silver-haired, harmless-looking veteran – but whose reputation for youthful brutality still parts crowds on the street. Watching a killing scene from the state's version of the 1965–66 massacres – the four-hour *The Treachery of the September 30th Movement of the Indonesian Communist Party (Pengkhianatan G 30 S/PKI, 1984)*, the viewing of which is an annual fixture on the Indonesian school curriculum – Anwar remarks that he used to do it far more sadistically. Early in the film he introduces us to his own innovation in efficient killing: a metal noose strung between stick and post ("This is how to do it without too much blood").

Anwar's passion and his business were movies, specifically Hollywood imports. He shows us the site of the cinema in Medan, the capital of North Sumatra, where he hung out, scalped tickets (the threat of a quota on profitable Hollywood imports seems to have fired his anti-communism) and by night, high on movies, danced his way across the street to conduct his murderous duties. ("That's not to say violent movies cause violent behaviour," reflects Oppenheimer, on both this and Guantanamo torturers' fascination with 24's Jack Bauer. "If you look at the movie that Anwar cites, it's not a violent movie, it's an Elvis Presley musical. So maybe the real problem – because Elvis Presley musicals aren't violent, they're just a little stupid – is escapist entertainment and escapist storytelling: our use of stories to escape from the reality of our lives.")

Lean, handsome, sometimes ebullient, sometimes brooding, Anwar himself makes a great movie protagonist. He even has a fat, black-comic sidekick, Herman Koto, whom we variously find cross-dressing in outre pink for the film's more unhinged fantasias and incompetently campaigning for electoral office, dreaming of the possibilities for extortion that will arise if he wins.

All the people I filmed volunteered not just to tell me what they'd done but to take me to the places where they killed, show me how they did it



Anwar was the 41st killer Oppenheimer met as he filmed up the chain of command from survivors' neighbours to the high ranks of power. Unlike some of the gang lords, tycoons and politicians he introduces us to, he doesn't seem to have cashed in big time. He's either less bright or less self-evasive than his blood comrade Adi Zulkadry, who flies in to help with the filming, then takes his leave once he's digested what the film is likely to do. But in his grapples with his dormant conscience Anwar is a key motor of the film, an ambiguous mix of swagger, cant, generosity and burgeoning unease. There's a haunting scene in the middle of the film where he sits on a fishing pier and stares out at the night. By the end of the film, though he hasn't repented or pleaded for forgiveness, his body seems to be in open revolt.

"He would oscillate between remorse and self-pity," says Oppenheimer. "I think he's trying to run away from his pain somehow – to use the filmmaking process much as he used Elvis Presley movies at the time, to distance himself from the act of killing. He hopes that if he can make a beautiful family movie about mass killing then he can somehow make it OK for himself. And he doesn't really care how it makes him look; in fact he's drawn to the pain of it, because that's the thing he's trying to deny. He's trying to replace the unspeakable horror that visits him in his nightmares with these contained, concrete scenes. It's like he's trying to build up a cinematic-psychic scar tissue over his wound."

"In that sense the film is not a psychodrama; it's not leading him towards redemption. He's trying to run away from what he's done – only to realise, no matter how much storytelling he's done, that he'll never be free to shake off the damage he's done to others and to himself. He'll never be able to replace the horror with the fiction, never bridge the gap between his fictional self and the reality of what he's done. He's in a kind of purgatory. And at the end, he's choking on the terror that comes when you look at the abyss between yourself and your image of yourself. It's like he's trying to vomit up the ghosts that haunt him, only to discover that he is the ghost. It's something Werner Herzog [who joined Errol Morris as an executive producer of *The Act of Killing* after he saw rough cuts] said when he saw the film: 'You know, these men have escaped justice but they've not escaped punishment.'"

Oppenheimer too had nightmares; he'd made his bed with troubled and dangerous men, and he was in for the long haul. "To make a good film with anybody you have to be willing to be intimate," he notes. "And that meant the process became hateful and haunting in a whole other way. You can't go into a situation where a million people have been killed and people are celebrating it and come out clean – unless you lie about it, or your position. People would ask me: 'Didn't you feel like you wanted to escape, like you'd just had enough?' I quickly understood that there was no escape: this is an integral part of our reality. We have to understand that genocide, dictatorship and the rule of gangsters – who Western corporations also used to break strikes and clear land – is the West's vision for Indonesia.

"When you have questions that are as big and important as this, it demands a lot of time and commitment. That's why you have to be very careful what films you choose to make," he concludes. "This took me seven-and-a-half years. When I started it Indonesians were



barely using mobile phones; by the end everybody was on iPhones and BlackBerrys, Facebook and Twitter, and I thought, 'Indonesia's moving on, why aren't I?' I thought nobody would care about this. My insecurity blinded me to the fact that of course time is what's made it possible for people to address this history. A younger generation of Indonesian is trying to make a life, and they see this film, and they don't want to end up like Anwar or Adi."

He holds up a special issue of *Tempo*, Indonesia's biggest news magazine, featuring 76 pages of silence-breaking stories from executioners all across Indonesia, commissioned after the editors had attended a closed screening of *The Act of Killing*.

"That set the whole tone for the Indonesian media," he explains. "It came like the little kid in 'The Emperor's New Clothes' saying, 'Look, the king is naked' – and everybody knew it but had been too afraid to say. But once it was shown so powerfully, and by the killers themselves – men who should be enjoying the fruits of their victory but instead are broken, destroyed by what they've done or utterly hollow and empty – it was thrilling."

i ***The Act of Killing* screens on 13 and 14 June at Sheffield Doc/Fest and on 22 June at London's Open City Documentary Festival, and is released in the UK on 28 June in a 159-minute director's cut and a shorter 115-minute theatrical version. The full transcript of this interview will appear online at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound**

DREAMS OF A LIFE
Above: two fantasias from *The Act of Killing* in which Congo and his friend Herman Koto dramatise their spiritual absolution. **Left:** a recreation of an attack on a 'communist' village

UNSPOKEN TRUTHS

Despite the sensationalist potential of its Tokyo vice setting, Abbas Kiarostami's new film 'Like Someone in Love' proves as rich in ambiguity and as demanding of its audience as the director's great Iranian works

By Geoff Andrew



When Abbas Kiarostami's *Like Someone in Love* premiered in Cannes last year some critics gave it a rough ride. Unfortunately, the press screening had run late; the journalists – many without umbrellas – had been kept queueing outside the Palais in torrential rain and, by the time they were all seated, the film was already underway. That might not have been a problem for a more conventional movie but Kiarostami, as preoccupied with point of view as ever, starts his characteristically simple-but-enigmatic story *in medias res* with a shot of the interior of a neon-lit Tokyo nightclub (a surprise in itself) which initially refuses to reveal who's speaking to who, let alone who or what the conversation is about. It's a strategy designed to encourage viewers to ask themselves a few basic questions about their relationship to what's on screen but many Cannes reviewers were more concerned with finding a seat and drying themselves off, which meant that some never really caught up with the movie.

At subsequent screenings the film has met with a noticeably more positive response; hardly surprising, since *Like Someone in Love* is as emotionally and intellectually satisfying, as visually elegant and teasingly ambiguous, as anything Kiarostami has made. Even as it ventures into what is for the Iranian auteur largely uncharted territory (made in Tokyo entirely in Japanese, it deals with, among other things, sex, prostitution and the prospect of abusive violence), it's also wholly

true to form in that it invites – requires – the spectator to engage imaginatively with the film in order to 'complete' the narrative's meaning. As it follows Akiko (Takanashi Rin), a student trying to juggle cash-flow problems, imminent exams, a visiting grandmother and possessive boyfriend Noriaki (Kase Ryo), to the home of Mr Watanabe (Okuno Tadashi), an elderly man of some importance, Kiarostami leaves plenty of questions unanswered. Most crucially, perhaps, why exactly she is being sent to spend the evening at Watanabe's flat and what he wants or expects of her, but also: how do the old man and Noriaki feel about one another? And what's going on between Akiko and Noriaki? While it's never difficult to follow the linear storyline, the sly, elliptical script is constantly pushing us to think about issues of truth, appearance and falsehood, age, experience and innocence, adversity and acceptance.

Despite the potentially lurid subject matter, Kiarostami's approach is as discreet, delicate and respectful of the main characters as you'd expect from the maker of films such as *Close-Up* (1990), *Taste of Cherry* (1997) and *10* (2002). Not that he shies away from the sexual aspects of his story; rather, he understands that some things are best left to the imagination and that a brief glimpse of a misplaced anklet might evoke a wide range of narrative possibilities. As ever in Kiarostami, what's *not* shown or said is just as telling as what we actually see and hear. 

CALL ME
Takanashi Rin, left, plays
student Akiko, moonlighting
as a prostitute, in *Like
Someone in Love*, directed by
Abbas Kiarostami, right





Geoff Andrew: How did you come to make a film in Japan?

Abbas Kiarostami: When I first went to Japan about 18 years ago I was in Roppongi, an area frequented by businessmen; it was late at night and in the street I noticed a girl of 16 or 17 in a very white dress and there were all these men in dark suits, considerably older, passing by. With the black contrasting with the white, it made a very striking image. I asked someone I was with what the girl was doing there and was told she was a prostitute; that lots of girls who came from the countryside to study in the city needed money so they worked part-time by going with businessmen. At that time I'd no thoughts of making a film but the image stuck in my mind. The idea for the story came much later, when I added the professor and boyfriend, but it was only two or three years ago when I was in Japan that I finally decided to make the film there.

I like Japan a lot; I sometimes think I'm more Japanese than Iranian! For example, I work a lot and the Japanese can be like that too. But also, when I was about 18, there was an Ozu retrospective at the cinematheque in Tehran and I liked his films enormously, though I'd still no idea of becoming a filmmaker myself. Sometimes journalists ask me to name my favourite director; it's difficult to answer that but, if pushed, I usually say Ozu and Keaton.

I also remember reading a poet – I can't recall if he was Japanese or Chinese, to be honest – who wrote a lot about the natural world: the full moon after the rain and so on. And I later wrote my own poems in a similar vein. Even some of my photos, especially the black-and-white ones in the book *Snow White*, feel quite Japanese to me in their resemblance to ink paintings. So when I go to Japan, I feel quite at home; I miss Tehran less than when I travel elsewhere.

So, since I now find it difficult to make my films in Iran, I thought: why not make one in Japan? I knew it was risky. I mentioned the idea to a woman who'd gone with Kurosawa to Russia to shoot *Dersu Uzala* (1975) and she told me he was in tears every night; it was so difficult working with a Russian crew he couldn't understand. And it was like that for me, except I didn't cry every night... only sometimes! It was hard to connect with the crew because the Japanese translator didn't convey my instructions very clearly. That was a real pity because working with the actors went very well indeed.

GA: The very first words in the film are "I'm not lying to you". It's interesting that you've again made a film where it's often unclear what's true and what isn't. You leave many things ambiguous.

AK: When I showed Okuno Tadashi the set for Watanabe's home he looked around at the books, pictures and furniture and said, "Well, I understand I'm meant to be a professor but what am I supposed to be doing with this beautiful young woman?" I said, "Let's look around; maybe you'll find some way into the relationship." I showed him a photo of Takanashi Rin, who was going to play Akiko, and he felt there was a resemblance between her face and a photo on the set which, he imagined, was of his character's wife or daughter. So that gave him some motivation, though we never actually say in the film why his character lives alone; we know nothing of his family or past. Even his neighbour's gossip tells us little about him. That's all the information I wanted to divulge, because people always hold something back. If you spent more time with Watanabe you might learn more, but the film covers 18 hours and that's all he'd give out about himself under the circumstances. Besides, we really don't need any more than that. After all, you can live with someone for 30 years and still not know everything about them; nor do we know ourselves that well, either.

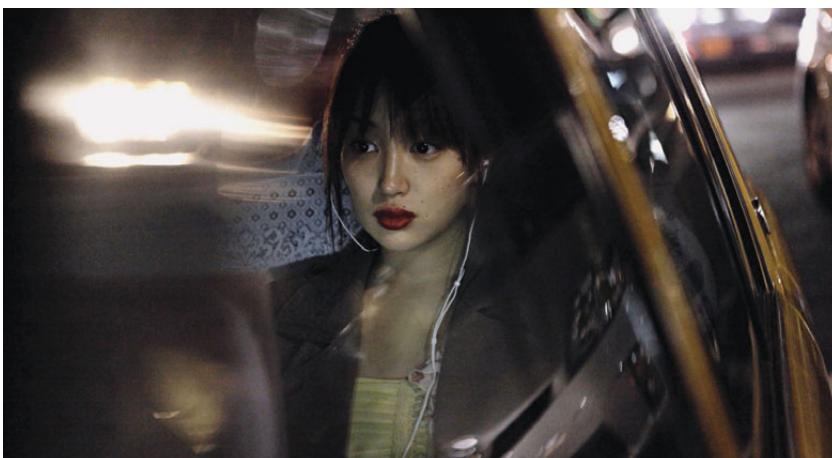
GA: A friend suggested Watanabe might be something of a self-portrait, in his apparent unease with the modern world.

AK: A little, perhaps, though I'm certainly not saying that the modern world and technology are bad. That's the reality we have to live with, so we must adapt to it. But also, I see some of myself in Noriaki, the young man. I was once his age; I've known jealousy and that kind of love, just as I've known the very different feelings of Watanabe. In fact, all the characters speak and think about themselves in relation to love; even the neighbour. They all see themselves as being like someone in love but they respond in different ways.

The film really is about like being in love, not about being in love. Love's not abstract or absolute; it's relative and we mean different things by it. It's changeable too. For example, many years ago I felt I was madly in love with someone; I'd spend hours and hours on the phone to her. But it didn't work out and when I met her again years later, I found it hard to spend more than a few minutes speaking with her. But to return to your question: I'm not just one of the characters but in all of them.

A woman who'd gone with Kurosawa to Russia to shoot 'Dersu Uzala' told me he was in tears every night; it was so difficult working with a crew he couldn't understand

TOKYO STORY
Working as a prostitute complicates the relationship between Akiko (Takanashi Rin, left) and her boyfriend Noriaki (Kase Ryo, right)





GA: In that respect it's like your other films.

AK: I'm showing that people of different generations behave differently. For example, for one scene I told the elderly actor to touch the girl's face in a certain way and he couldn't or wouldn't do it; it just wasn't his way of doing things. After three takes I saw that to be truthful to his character, I had to obey him rather than vice versa. It's like when I asked him, "What do you think Watanabe wants of this woman tonight?" He became very anxious, took me aside and said, "I must tell you something. I'm too old, I'm not up to this." So I told him, "Don't worry, it's not that sort of film. You won't have to do anything bad!"

GA: With the exception of *10*, prostitution and sex haven't really featured in your films before. Did you feel you were embarking on new territory?

AK: Yes and no. This is nothing to do with censorship or Iran being a Muslim country, because I'm not Muslim. I remember when I first visited Europe – Rome – I'd see young couples kissing on the buses and no one paying any attention. For me that had been something private; but I realised that, if no one was bothered by it, they were doing nothing wrong. Still, people don't usually observe private activities, especially sex, and my attitude is this: if people don't normally see something in public, why would I expect or force them to see it in the cinema?

So with Akiko, I needed to show that prostitution was her job, something she had to do; but how? Finally I found a solution by using reflections. But then I had to think about what it was that Watanabe wanted and how he'd respond to her. So I wrote dialogue only for the girl and during rehearsals I told Rin, the actress, not to say certain lines, to save them for the shoot. So when we came to filming and she said, "Come to bed, I need warming up," or, "Which side of the bed do you sleep on?" it took Mr Okuno totally by surprise and he didn't know what to do. That worked really well for the film.

In fact I kept the entire crew in ignorance of what would happen between them. They knew there was a dinner table and a bed but that was it. And, though I'd written a complete, very detailed script, I only gave it to the actors on a daily basis, for the scenes we'd be shooting. They never wanted to change it; being Japanese, they didn't seem to feel they could do that. But Rin in particular was very clever, very talented. Look at the expression in her eyes in the final scene. She looks but doesn't see, listens but doesn't hear; she's there but totally absent. All that came from her, not from me.

GA: You've said that each of your films arises from its predecessor. How does this relate to *Certified Copy*?

AK: Well, of course, it's not that conscious or deliberate but there's a moment when Akiko stands looking at the painting and talks about it; that reminded me that in *Certified Copy* there was a moment when William [Shimell] and Juliette [Binoche] stand together and discuss a painting. And in a way that's where you get my manifesto about art.

I was pleased to find the painting for this film because I wanted to have something Akiko and Watanabe could discuss – something that wasn't just trivial like the weather – before moving on to the main subject. It's quite an important painting, because it was the first time a traditional Japanese subject had been painted in oils using Western techniques. So it's a combination of East and West. It's important to look around you and see what else is out there. For example, I have my roots in Iran but I don't want to look only at my roots; one's own culture can be like a prison. So I've looked to other cultures, including the West, for philosophy and art. More than that: the only thing that continues to excite me as a filmmaker is to be able to do something different, to keep on experimenting and doing something which is new and fresh, even if it shocks or surprises others – or myself.

So, with this film, I wanted to begin it in the middle of a scene where you'd have no idea who was speaking or what had just been discussed. As for the ending, for a long while I couldn't come up with anything, then I eventually settled on the ending the film has now. But I did feel it would upset, shock or displease some people so I tried it out on [producer] Marin Karmitz and some other friends. They thought it would probably be fine, so I went ahead.

The truth is, I make my films for myself. I don't have a career plan which involves being popular or successful with a big audience. For instance, the last time I was in Cannes, the crowds turned out to see Juliette in a largely English-language film; this time I've come with a film in Japanese and three actors who are almost totally unknown. Many people believed that after *Certified Copy* I'd be making more films with stars but I did the exact opposite. Indeed, if there's a country as culturally isolated from the rest of the world as Iran, it may be Japan. So I feel almost as if I've gone back to square one.

i *Like Someone in Love* is released in the UK on 21 June and is reviewed on page 78



SLEEPING BEAUTY

The generational disconnect between Mr Watanabe (Okuno Tadashi), right, and Akiko plays out in the elderly man's apartment

I have my roots in Iran but I don't want to look only at my roots; one's own culture can be like a prison

SOLITARY SISTERS

From the economics of the sex trade to portraits of overcommitted pet owners, the films of Austrian director Ulrich Seidl have always divided viewers. His new 'Paradise' trilogy – in which three linked heroines search for different forms of salvation – is no exception

By Richard Porton

A handful of critical truisms tend to be continually recycled in reviews of Ulrich's Seidl's films. He is frequently dubbed a 'provocateur'; his camera's gaze is often termed 'unflinching'; and his films, which usually prove divisive for both critics and audiences, are invariably labelled 'disturbing' by admirers and detractors alike.

Although he began his career as a documentarian (Seidl has often explained that it was much easier to obtain funding in his native Austria for documentaries than for fiction films when he started out in the 1980s), both his early documentaries and subsequent features intersperse fictional and non-fictional elements in a manner that has become not only de rigueur but, perhaps, the dominant arthouse style among filmmakers on the festival circuit such as Jia Zhangke, Pedro Costa and Abbas Kiarostami. Yet while Jia and Costa's films are known for their meditative styles and languorous tempos, Seidl's aesthetic is unabashedly confrontational.

A diffident man who prefers to discuss his 'process' instead of proffering interpretations, he doesn't mince words when I remind him, in the rather antiseptic environs of New York's Austrian Cultural Forum, that he once introduced a screening of his first fiction film *Dog Days* (2001) by encouraging the audience to "have a disturbing" evening. "That was an intentional provocation on my part," he muses, "because, to a certain extent, the spectator knows what he's in for. I could just as well have said 'have an entertaining evening'." The man whose documentaries include *Animal Love* (1996), a film in which pets double as masturbatory aids, and *Models* (1999), which depicts the fashionista milieu as fuelled by protracted cocaine ingestion and bulimic purges, is well aware that viewers and critics either see his films as trenchant social and political critiques or exploitative freak shows. Cognisant of the outrage his films often generate, he prefers to focus on his preoccupation with lonely outcasts: "Solitude and isolation are always present in my films. In the case of *Animal Love*, the men try to compensate for the lack of love in their lives, and the animals are there to assuage that need."

Since *Dog Days*, Seidl's films have seamlessly straddled non-fiction and fiction. "The reason I cast professionals and non-professionals," he claims, "has less to do with a mixture of documentary and fiction than the tension that arises when the two confront each other. What I'm asking from all actors, professional or non-

professional, is that they be as authentic as possible in front of the camera." This collision between the polished performances of actors and the rough-hewn authenticity of non-professionals animates Seidl's most recent project, last year's *Paradise* trilogy: a cinematic triptych devoted to the laborious vacations of three middle-class Austrian women. Employing *Dekalog*-like overlapping narratives without any trace of Kieslowski's metaphysical preoccupations, the films dissect the industrialisation of leisure as practised by three intrepid heroines.

In *Paradise: Love*, Teresa (Margarethe Tiesel) flees her job supervising mentally disabled children to become an amorous 'sugar mama' in search of love in Mombasa, Kenya's second-largest city – an urban idyll where local 'beach boys' squeeze as much as they can out of European women while professing their love. Teresa's sister Anna Maria (Maria Hofstätter) is the antiheroine of *Paradise: Faith*; a fanatical Catholic, her brief respite from a job as an x-ray technician leads to a bout of intensive proselytising that involves her toting a 'wandering virgin' statue from house to house. An even drearier holiday at an austere diet camp is imposed on Teresa's daughter Melanie (Melanie Lenz), the protagonist of *Paradise: Hope*.

Instead of achieving paradiacal bliss, the women of Seidl's trilogy stumble down a purgatorial slope of their own creation, and end up more frustrated than ever. For Seidl, these women are soured idealists whose fortitude makes them worthy of our admiration. "The films," he insists, "depict women who are searching for hope, so-called paradise. And, of course, they fail. Because of their experience, they learn something. It's only through experience, in my opinion, that anyone can learn anything and change is possible. That's our fate; we have to look for paradise, even if we've lost it and even if we keep on losing it."

The early reviews of *Paradise: Love* reiterated much of the critical ire that Seidl's work has always inspired. Decked out in bikinis and lusting for black flesh, the spectacle of Teresa and her sugar-mama compatriots trolling along the beaches is like a red flag for certain critics; *The New York Times* described the film as "punitive" while *The Hollywood Reporter* dismissed it as an "empty wallow". Some viewers also maintained that using these overweight women's cellulite-flecked bodies as surrogates for the sins of colonialism bordered on misogyny. Many of Seidl's fiercest critics are



FAITH, HOPE AND VÉRITÉ
Clockwise from above: Anna Maria (Maria Hofstätter) in *Paradise: Faith*; Kenyan beach life in *Paradise: Love*; Melanie (Melanie Lenz) and friends in *Paradise: Hope*



 sceptical of arguments that his aesthetic stance fuses empathetic intimacy with quasi-Brechtian critical distance.

For Seidl, this oscillation between compassion and scorn can be summed up in one word: ambivalence. He argues that it's important for audiences to identify with his hapless protagonists before assessing the political or ethical implications of their escapades: "It's essential for my work that the viewer be able to project himself into Teresa's plight and ask what she's looking for. There is a politically incorrect element – the racist remarks and neocolonialist attitudes; nevertheless, she's a victim as well as a perpetrator. If the spectator should feel obliged to identify with characters on the screen, it's not because I want them to cast judgement or make a value judgement as to whether what Teresa is doing is good or bad. The story I'm telling should hold up a mirror to our society. I want the spectator to identify with the characters so they can realise how complicit they are with – and how they share a certain responsibility for – what is depicted on screen."

Seidl argues that the narrative tension he sought could only have been engendered by "casting my beach boys among real people and my sugar mamas among actresses". He is also known for encouraging actors to improvise while shooting, with a radical commitment to contingency; he boasts that his scripts include absolutely no dialogue. "All dialogue is improvised on set with the actors," he says. "I try, as much as possible, to shoot chronologically. This allows me to make changes and to deviate from the script based on the results I've obtained. Based on those results, I can see what is working and not working and I can make changes or even reject what I've shot and take things in a different direction, regardless of what I've originally written. The script is not very important on the set; in fact, I never have a script on the set."

THREE COLOURS

In both *Import/Export*, a previous *succès de scandale* that provoked boos at Cannes in 2007, and *Paradise: Love* a preoccupation with prostitution exemplifies Seidl's efforts to move beyond the perversities of the Viennese suburbs and explore the consumerist ethos in the age of globalisation. Yet he makes clear that Paul, the unemployed security guard who migrates to the Ukraine and partakes of a prostitute's services in *Import/Export*, is "linked to his stepfather, who tells him, 'You can buy anything with money'. This says a lot about the Western world and its attitude towards poorer countries."

Conceding that, "in the same way, the attitude of the sugar mamas towards the beach boys in *Paradise: Love* says a lot about the attitude of the Western world towards the so-called Third World", he also points out how "so-called female sex tourism works differently from male sex tourism. As you see in the film, they're looking for more than sex; they're looking for tenderness and affection, not just the act itself. The beach boys know this and realise they need to build up to sex and asking for money, to tell them how beautiful they are and work slowly. One's physical appearance doesn't determine how attractive one will be. With male clients, it's different: it's always 'How much does this cost, how much does that cost?' With sugar mamas, it's a slower process."



The Kenyan government's squeamish view of the sex trade reflects the double bind of despising European boorishness while coveting the visitors' largesse. As Seidl observes, "Kenya wants tourism; they want the money to be derived from tourism; everything has been corrupted. There's a special tourism police force designed to protect tourists from other Africans. In Mombasa, where we shot, sugar-mama sex tourism isn't so visible publicly. It's a very Islamic society. If you go to the beach, the women are fully clothed and you don't see any bathing suits – and certainly not any miniskirts."

Although Seidl is well aware that as a European filmmaker he was, inevitably, something of an interloper in Africa, his extensive research in casting the beach boys is a definite point of pride. "It wasn't difficult to cast them," he says, but "it took a long time. Over a period of two years, I repeatedly returned to Kenya to meet people I had already met and to meet new people. What was a problem was the fact that a white person, especially a white tourist, is always seen by the beach boys as rich. The relationship is corrupted; it's always based on money and there's no way to correct that. You build up a friendship with the beach boys; they say they consider you a friend. But it always comes down to money. Still, that's why it was important for me to research the lives of the beach boys, their living conditions, their family background." Seidl coaxes an especially impressive

TRIPLE DARE
Ulrich Seidl, above, is again on controversial form with his *Paradise* trilogy, exploring sex, colonialism, religion and – in *Paradise: Hope*, right – teenage body anxieties

performance from Peter Kazungu as Munga, Teresa's primary object of affection. Nevertheless, despite his sympathetic portrayal, Kazungu's character is essentially unknowable. "The characters are not presented equally," admits Seidl. "The film is much more from Teresa's viewpoint than from his."

HOME TRUTHS

When Seidl returns to his home terrain of the Viennese suburbs in *Paradise: Faith*, Anna Maria, the cheery fundamentalist Catholic, resembles the sort of garrulous lunatic familiar to us from films such as *Dog Days*. Of course Seidl, at least in statements for public consumption, views her crazed religiosity with more equanimity: "Sex is an important theme in all of my films and for all of my protagonists. In the case of Anna Maria, her deep love for Jesus leads her to desire him physically. Taking love and desire to that level is something I completely understand. I know that some Catholics might see that as a provocation but, when I think of a character such as Anna Maria, she seems totally believable."

The script's basic structure is derived from Seidl's 2003 documentary *Jesus, You Know*, a film that undermines the supposed altruism of zealous Christians by asking them to verbalise their (frequently narcissistic) prayers. During research for *Jesus, You Know* Seidl discovered the odd cult of the Wandering Madonna in Austria, which he thought had "quite a bit of dramaturgical potential". He found inspiration for his protagonist at the same time: "The character of Anna Maria goes back to a woman I met while filming *Jesus* – a woman who is also married to an Arab man who was confined to a wheelchair. Within the Austrian Catholic Church there are very fundamentalist, hierarchical, almost semi-military groups such as the Legion of the Sacred Heart and the Legion of Mary, built on the premise of doing missionary work."

A Buñuelian admixture of faith and eroticism suffuses an early scene in which Anna Maria strips off most of her clothes and proceeds to flagellate herself before a crucifix. Despite the superficially blasphemous imagery, the sequence recalls a rich tradition of devotional painting that blends surprisingly well with a strain of realism reminiscent of the work of photographers such as Diane Arbus and Nan Goldin. When I ask Seidl if he had specific pictorial influences in mind, he demurs: "The style always comes out of the specific locations that I've chosen; the colours, the atmosphere, the buildings and lighting inspire the *mise en scène*."

The physical demands of acting in a Seidl film are not lost on the director himself. As he acknowledges, "There are very few actors that are suitable for my roles and for my method of working. Very few actors, at least professional actors, are capable of improvising. Very few of them are willing to play against non-professionals because, with non-professionals, there's no safety net: there are no pre-determined conventions. With Margarethe Tiesel, it was certainly the greatest challenge of her career – one that she accepted willingly."

"With Maria Hofstätter," he continues, "the challenge was of a different nature because she found it very difficult to slip into that role and take on that part. She had an extremely strict Catholic upbringing and she exerted a lot of effort to extricate herself from that past. It was difficult for her to get into this mode and took

years of preparation, between her and myself, before she agreed to accept the role."

At first glance, *Paradise: Hope* seems like a gentler, less abrasive work. Although Melanie, the overweight adolescent who fails to lose much weight at diet camp, seems as doomed as her adult peers by the end of the film, a mellower Seidl surfaces briefly and his barbed humour is more subtle than the rapier-like sardonicism wielded in *Paradise: Love* and *Paradise: Faith*. Inasmuch as Melanie is infatuated with the camp doctor (played by Austrian stage veteran Joseph Lorenz), the lack of explicit sexuality in their encounters comes off as unusually restrained. Seidl explains that he wasn't trying to be gentler. "If the premise went any farther," he says, "and if I wanted to be any more provocative, it would have involved sexual abuse of the child. When you're dealing with children or adolescents you have to be somewhat more protective. But, essentially, I dealt with Melanie the same way I worked with Maria or Margarethe Tiesel."

Despite a pleasing rural setting, the diet camp is as regimented as an army barracks. According to Seidl, "while the military aspect of the camps is something you find in the United States, it doesn't exist in Austria. That's something that I invented for this film. All of the films deal with the protagonists' relationship with their bodies. The difference here is that the children are innocent. They're not wholly responsible for the way they look; they're a product of their families and of society. Based on my research, kids who go to diet camps don't lose much weight at all; as soon as they're back to their routine at home their poor eating habits reassert themselves."

Like all Seidl's films, the *Paradise* trilogy synthesises scabrousness, pathos and humour. His eyes light up when I compare his stance to the fatalistic gallows humour of Austrian author Thomas Bernhard: "I feel very close to Thomas Bernhard since his novels infuse the terror of human existence with profound humour." Offering a cautionary footnote, he adds: "I should point out that, as far as humour is concerned, it depends very much on the individual spectator. In cinemas, you often have one person convulsed with laughter while the person next to him feels absolutely scandalised."

i *Paradise: Love* is released in the UK on 14 June and is reviewed on page 82. *Paradise: Faith* is released on 5 July and is reviewed on page 81. *Paradise: Hope* is released on 2 August and will be reviewed in next month's issue. The entire trilogy screens on 16 June at BFI Southbank, London

Sex is an important theme in all my films and for all my protagonists. In the case of Anna Maria, her deep love for Jesus leads her to desire him physically



THIS SPECTRED ISLE

Set in the 17th century during the Civil War, 'A Field in England' – director Ben Wheatley's follow-up to 'Kill List' and 'Sightseers' – belongs to a rich and varied tradition in British cinema of films that tap into the mysteries, magic and dark forces of our countryside

By Kim Newman

The title of the art-horror hybrid *A Field in England* – directed by Ben Wheatley and written by Amy Jump – is at once specific and vague, just like the film's setting: a very physical stretch of English countryside in the year 1648, which is also somehow removed from the clamour of the raging Civil War, ringed by smoke and permeated by magic. So few British films beyond a clutch of history texts (*Cromwell*, 1970, *To Kill a King*, 2003) are set in this fascinating period – certainly the number is minuscule when compared with the wealth of Hollywood cinema obsessed with the American Civil War – that each seems to have a close relationship with all of the others. *A Field in England* evokes both the historical grand guignol of Michael Reeves's *Witchfinder General* (1968) and the hyper-real black-and-white earthiness of Kevin Brownlow's *Winstanley* (1976), while its characters – not identified as fighting for the parliament or the King, and more concerned with their own survival and ambitions – are mostly victims of history like the folk in John Gilling's Hammer historical swashbuckler *The Scarlet Blade* (1964).

Landscape is crucial to American genres like the western and the road movie, and even informs fantastical styles such as science fiction – the deserts in Jack Arnold's films *It Came from Outer Space* (1953) and *Tarantula* (1955) – and horror, from the haunted New England of *Let's Scare Jessica to Death* (1971) to the winding Colorado approach to the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining* (1980). But English landscape is too often taken for granted. Our science-fiction films prefer to spend time down the stage-set pub or in anonymous research establishments while our horrors are often indoors, on period sets, and concerned with fractured families rather than forces of nature. The most familiar woodland in British horror is Black Park near Windsor, whose tall, straight trees Hammer passed off as their imaginary version of Transylvania, though they also serve as an English backdrop in *The Scarlet Blade*. This tame, accessible location looks nothing like the real Carpathians, but neither does it resemble Corn-

wall, which it is supposed to represent in Gilling's *The Reptile* (1966) and *Plague of the Zombies* (1966).

Before *Witchfinder General* only odd, unloved, independent British horror films ventured much beyond the home counties. The Cornish coast does feature in *Doctor Blood's Coffin* (1961), shot by a young Nicolas Roeg, and the ridiculous *The Vulture* (1967); bloody doings in the West Country would continue in *Crucible of Terror* (1971) – one of the few British horror films to poke about on beaches the way Roger Corman or Jean Rollin do – and the mummerset-inflected *Disciple of Darkness* (1972). Comparatively few Hammer Films stress Englishness in their settings, and the outstanding examples tend to be by non-British directors: American exile Joseph Losey makes startling use of Weymouth and nearby cliffs in *The Damned* (1963) while Canadian Silvio Narizzano plays up the stagnant ponds and thick woods around the mad diva's prison-like home in the genuinely gothic *Fanatic* (1965). When Corman brought his previously studio-bound Edgar Allan Poe series from California to Britain, he finally stepped off baroque sets for *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1964), which puts Vincent Price in the middle of an authentic ruined Norfolk abbey and (like *Plague of the Zombies*, *Man at the Top*, *The Ruling Class* and *The Final Conflict*) finds horror in the well-dressed brutality and regimented class distinction of fox-hunting.

Victorian London – or at least an imaginary section of it composed of scraps of Dickens and Doyle and Stoker and Stevenson and Madame Tussaud's Jack the Ripper in thick fog – holds a key position in our horror culture. Of core classic horror texts only *The Hound of the Baskervilles* takes the train west and finds an equally rich and strange Dartmoor, with sucking mires and howling legends and paleolithic remains. Often, when it comes to locating magical, savage pockets of rural lore, British cinema overlooks England entirely and imagines Scots islands – from Powell and Pressburger's *I Know Where I'm Going!* (1945) to Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man* (1973) – or Irish backwaters, as in Hammer's *Wake Wood* (2011).



FIELD OF DREAMS
A Field in England roots its flights of fancy firmly in a few acres of English countryside



 When in development as a Hollywood production, Robert Holdstock's novel *Mythago Wood*, one of the great evocations of the magical English countryside, was reset in Scotland because the studios couldn't imagine space for such infinities as Holdstock's Ryhope. (No matter that Powell and Pressburger shot a great deal of *A Canterbury Tale*, one of the great film evocations of the magical English countryside, on the Holdstock farm in Kent owned by another branch of the novelist's family.) Similarly, Clive Barker's monster novella *Rawhead Rex*, set in a small English village, was shifted to Ireland for budgetary reasons in George Pavlou's 1986 film – despite the fact that its monster's Latin name came from the Roman occupation, which didn't happen in Ireland.

Michael Reeves shot *Witchfinder General* in Suffolk and Norfolk not to bring horror out to the country but because he wanted to make a kind of British western in horror-film disguise. His film's plot is basically a Budd Boetticher-Randolph Scott revenge/chase drama, harrying across green fields rather than arid badlands. But the American West's scenery complements the harshness of the western, whereas the English countryside counterpoints the horrors with black-clad figures on horseback, splashes of blood on greenery and authentic recreations of witch-torture on the precise sites where the historical events took place. The short-lived Reeves's smart, nasty little film was not much noticed on its release but has – like *The Wicker Man* – ascended to a pantheon over the years. Far more 'important' at the time but less liked these days, John Schlesinger's expensive, romantic adaptation of Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1967), shot again by Roeg, is one of cinema's periodic attempts to realise Hardy's only-just-imaginary county of Wessex, which lies like tracing paper over the real map of the West Country. Roman Polanski filmed *Tess* (1979) in Brittany to try to get a sense of this corner of England, perhaps for legal reasons as much as artistic. His earlier *Cul-de-sac* (1966) was made for the producers of *Witchfinder General*, with Donald Pleasence – the actor Reeves would have preferred over Vincent Prince as star of his film; here Polanski uses Lindisfarne in Northumberland so distinctively that Holy Island has been unofficially off-limits as a location ever since.

WIDE OPEN SPACES

The subject of *A Field in England* is magic, melding cloak-swishing alchemy with mushroom-based psychedelia. Three soldiers (Richard Glover, Peter Ferdinando, Ryan Pope) and a scholar (Reece Shearsmith) find themselves in the field and are compelled to haul on a rope to drag in an Irish outsider, the treasure-seeking magician O'Neil (Michael Smiley). The field is at once small and infinite, with few landmarks, but the scholar is used as a hunting dog to pinpoint the location where the treasure is to be dug up.

In one of the few British films explicitly influenced by Reeves, Piers Haggard's *The Blood on Satan's Claw* from 1971 (which Shearsmith recently did a DVD commentary track on with his fellows in the *League of Gentlemen* troupe), a 17th-century farmer comes across a demonic skull while ploughing his field. Evil infects his whole community until a witchfinding judge (played by Patrick Wymark, Cromwell in *Witchfinder General*) arrives to apply extreme measures to end the malign influence.



A Field in England sometimes seems like Haggard's film put through a blender and transformed into a rustic English take on the earthy symbolic dramas Ingmar Bergman made on his rocky Swedish islands. There are one or two precedents for such hybrids in British cinema, like Chris Newby's medieval monochrome fable *Anchor-ess* (1993), but it isn't a familiar mode.

THE OUTER LIMITS
Clockwise from top: the eerie potential of the English countryside has been explored in films as diverse as *The Woman in Black*, *Cul-de-sac* and *Witchfinder General*

Wheatley's previous films also get out into the English countryside, but mainly for contrast with town settings, exporting their evils from Brighton, suburbia or Birmingham. In *Down Terrace* (2009), the claustrophobia of a plot set almost entirely in a crowded family home in Brighton is barely relieved by trips out onto the South Downs to get rid of bodies. In *Kill List* (2011), suburban hitmen (notionally from London, though Film Yorkshire funding means the anonymous estate is even more anonymously located) carry out bloody atrocities in small-town garages and motels before being run to ground on a vast country estate. In *Sightseers* (2012), a caravanning trip for a perfectly matched couple of rage-driven holidaymakers becomes a killing spree where holiday sights – like Crich Tram Museum – are marked by murders of variously obnoxious or innocent types who cross their path.

A Field in England looks different, even if recurrent player Michael Smiley (who is even in Wheatley's POV vampire episode of *The ABCs of Death*, 2012) is still around: the cinematography is starkly black and white,



the language is fruitily in period and the plot is even more oblique – to the extent that much of it is deliberately difficult to fathom, as if the field were a tesseract away from genre and narrative as well as from history and geography. In this the film approaches the type of British 1970s television horror – practised by Nigel Kneale (*The Stone Tape*, *Quatermass*), Alan Garner (*The Owl Service*, *Red Shift*) and others (*Children of the Stones*) – in which standing stones are locuses for hard-to-fathom sacrifices and miracles, and deep history is constantly on the point of breaking through the surface, often with gruesome, physical consequences.

Wheatley isn't unique among the current generation of British horror filmmakers to get out of the city. In both *Eden Lake* (2009) and *The Woman in Black* (2012), very different types of horror, James Watkins has townies terrorised in stretches of the countryside: *Eden Lake* even uses (and transforms) Hammer's Black Park as a haunt of feral estate kids, while *The Woman in Black*, made for Hammer, follows Susan Hill's M.R. James-influenced novel by haunting marsh roads (an Essex location). Also finding horror in odd corners are Johannes Roberts's demon-haunted *Forest of the Damned* (2005), the living-corpse horror *Dead Wood* (2007), Tom Shankland's Christmas-set *The Children* (2008), Paul Andrew Williams's farm-mutant picture *The Cottage* (2008), the witch movie *The Scar Crow* (2009) and the vampire movie *Blood & Roses*

(2009); Susan Jacobson's stalker/suspense picture *The Holding* (2011); the weekend-break slasher films *Gnaw* (2008) and *Don't Let Him In* (2011); the 'found footage' horrors *A Night in the Woods* (2011) and *Hollow* (2012); gore-comedies such as the village-set *Hot Fuzz* (2007), *Small Town Folk* (2007), *Doghouse* (2009), *Lesbian Vampire Killers* (2009) and Alex Chandon's *Two Thousand Maniacs!*; in-Yorkshire knockabout *Inbred* (2011); Leigh Dovey's cyclical *The Fallow Field* (2012); and the interestingly paired Northern-set zombie projects *Harold's Going Stiff* (2012) and *In the Flesh* (2013).

It may be that changes in the industry mean that the current crop of British horrors are shut out of even the small studios where Hammer or Amicus made the bulk of their films from the 1950s to the 70s. One thing shared by *Doctor Blood's Coffin*, *Cul-de-sac* and *Disciple of Darkness* is that they were all made outside the cosy enclaves of Bray or Shepperton and had to go out on location for budgetary reasons. As with the contemporary chroniclers of British horror, some just prayed it wouldn't rain and hoped to make it to the end of the shoot with enough footage to cut together, while others were inspired to address the magical, primal aspects of our blood-soaked, history-and-legend-imbued landscape.



A Field in England is released in the UK on 5 July, simultaneously in cinemas, on DVD, freeview TV and video on demand, and is reviewed on page 74

Films made outside the cosy enclaves of Bray or Shepperton had to go out on location for budgetary reasons

ARTISTS' FILM AND VIDEO

FEAR OF A FLAT PLANET

A revelatory strand at Oberhausen offered multiple perspectives on the unbearable flatness of being in an age of digital alienation

By John Beagles

"How can I see the world as it is if it seems unreal to me? Constantly eludes me. How can I locate a core, an essence in that multitude and that variety of alliances, migrations and transformations in the world of today... How can I make it visible?" These words, spoken by a middle-aged professor played by Willy Thomas in Herman Asselberghs's compelling film *Speech Act* (2011), could have been written with the Flatness series of screenings at this year's Oberhausen Short Film Festival in mind. Expertly curated by Shama Khanna (in conjunction with artists Anthea Hamilton, Oliver Laric and Ed Atkins), this rich, varied and complex selection of work sought to chart the emotional and cognitive effects of our constantly morphing, modulating digital culture of speed and precarity. Understanding flatness as "ontological category, digital morphology and emotional state", Khanna's programme of

screenings mapped a topography that extended Asselberghs's character's sense of bewilderment, exploring a burgeoning desire for agency and change. In more than 50 films, artists such as Phil Collins, Leslie Thornton, Harun Farocki, Hito Steyerl, Pablo Bronstein, Anthea Hamilton, Frances Stark and the Bernadette Corporation charted what it feels like to be always plugged in and always on the hedonic treadmill of our consumerist-entertainment network.

While the idea of flatness as an expression of technologically generated alienation is nothing new (Khanna referenced Robert Bresson's use of a kind of strategic blankness, and Georg Simmel's notion of the blasé springs to mind: "everything appears to the blasé person in an evenly flat and grey tone"), the Flatness screenings pointedly asserted that a tectonic shift has occurred thanks to the digital revolution (insurrection?). For Khanna, the central thematic proposition was that "the time we spend working and socialising behind screens compresses the roundness of real life experience standardising the presence of human emotion into an algorithmic exercise". In part, as the strand's full title, 'Flatness, Cinema after the Internet', hinted, this tectonic shift in the consumption of

images owes much to the internet's privatisation of viewing. The relocation, enlargement and projection of films made on private computer screens into the darkened communal space of the cinema auditorium was a core curatorial strategy to reinstate some of the 'roundness'.

Critically, there were some distinct positions at work in the Flatness screenings. One strand offered an accelerationist, hyperbolic ventriloquising of digital culture, pushing it to the point of implosion (most obviously in Ed Atkins's work); the other was far more sober, detached and analogue in its critical dissection. This was fitting for a programme in which feelings of duality, paradox and incommensurability dominated. It was also again curatorially significant. Legitimating these distinctive responses created productive tensions with regard to the depiction of the tectonic shifts created by digital culture and, perhaps more importantly, the development of a sense of agency in response.

These tensions were memorably played out in Thomas's performance in *Speech Act*. Delivering an impassioned 'lecture' on the visual spectacle of James Cameron's *Avatar*, the character offers an expertly constructed line of Socratic reasoning that deflates Cameron's bloated billion-



Amiga mia: Mark Pellegrino's G.I.R.L.

dollar soufflé spectacle. Filming in close-up, Asselberghs's camera circles Thomas's face in anti-spectacular concentration on the mundane features of the human form. Unsurprisingly, watching Thomas's face proved infinitely more compelling and seductive than a Na'vi freefall into 3D space. The rising indignation signalled by Thomas's flickering eyes – like his final confrontational stare into the cinema auditorium – is everything the 'flat' generation is not. If, as the catalogue asserted, "flatness is a lack of subjective expression", then Thomas's character is the intense, impassioned, angry, singular opposite, all rough edges and indigestible bumps.

However, it was hard not to shake the feeling that there was a palpable sense of melancholy in the work. This was an elegy not just to a man out of time but to a man passing out of time, on the verge of extinction. The cinematic figures Thomas's character invokes in his speech (Godard, Pasolini and Antonioni, the triumvirate of canonised avant-garde filmmakers) were like him, the old guard. In her post-film discussion, Khanna referred to *Speech Act* as reactionary, which was a telling description. Certainly, Thomas's character's opposition to the homogenised, flattened spectacle of the 'monster of the mainstream' was unrepentantly Adornian in its critical methodology. The question of whether this kind of position remains tenable today loomed large. Within neoliberal culture, the increasing atomisation of social groups creates forms of cultural apartheid that slice through our cities (a theme expertly plotted in China Miéville's fiction). Thomas's character's critique in places sounded more like a retreat into one of these secure zones, a refusal to engage in the digital conversation. Asselberghs's film also quietly suggested the persuasive, seductive oratory power of the spoken argument had some uncomfortable parallels with Cameron's seductive visual spectacle.

Harun Farocki's unforgettable film *Ein neues Produkt* (2012) could perhaps be best described as a horror film. This documentary records various brainstorming conversations between executives, architects and consultants in German corporations (including Vodafone) discussing how to radically transform the culture of their working spaces. The corporate hope is that by creating kinds of faux-interactive open-plan hot-desked gaming spaces, companies will 'facilitate' the creation of more productive, self-regulatory workers; or, as one particularly enthusiastic advocate puts it, "at the cost of limiting individualised standardisation-level hierarchies facilitate holistic processes better". These are corporate men – tellingly, only one woman appears – who have a strong sense of themselves as creatives; at one point, one member suggests that "we need a total artwork of leadership conviction". Intercut with such riffing on how to create a fluid, open culture are glacial CGI glides through the open-plan 'fun' offices of the future. Farocki's film, determinedly sober and detached (there's no significant manipulation of the subjects), is masterful in its capturing of the disjunction between the corporate rhetoric of openness in a post-disciplinary framework and the consistent expression of



Helen Marten's *Evian Disease*



Ed Atkins's *Warm, Warm, Warm Spring Mouths*

a deeply instrumental approach to people as 'units' or things to be exploited. This is a horrific mapping of the forms of soft tyranny now viral and omnipotent within neoliberalism. Gilles Deleuze's notion of "ceaseless control in open sites" is here devastatingly rendered or "made visible". Farocki's film's depiction of the creation of a culture of control seems prescient, revelatory and vital in further developing currently nascent forms of resistance and opposition.

Powerful as Asselberghs's and Farocki's films are, their weighting is resolutely logo-centric. In both, attentive listening to the word is primary. In other parts of the Flatness program, a far more visually and sonically immersive aesthetic of CGI saturation and hallucinogenic morphed forms shifted the modes of attention required of the viewer. This was most obvious in the work of Ed Atkins, Frances Stark and Helen Marten. The 'prosumer' revolution has enabled these artists to use the tools, forms and aesthetics of digital culture against itself, to virally infect the smooth contours and infantilised cuteness of computer modeling with psychological fractures and bodily desires and appetites.

If, as the critical theorist Franco Berardi has said, the symptoms of dementia are one of the defining characteristics of the effects produced by neoliberalism on its 'cognitive workers', then all the figures in Ed Atkins's work show the symptoms. In his new film *Warm, Warm, Warm Spring Mouths* perfectly rendered CGI bodies (good teeth, good skin, luscious hair) house damaged psyches caught in the process of unravelling and breaking down. In windowless interior spaces, Atkins's mesmerically rendered, immobilised avatars repetitively mouth banal platitudes: "I don't want to hear any news on the radio about the weather on the weekend." The encounter is nightmarish, akin to conversing with your confused, lost senile grandfather, whose voice emanates from a Brad Pitt shell. The chasm between digital culture's rhetoric of freedom and possibilities and the psychological effects on the minds and material bodies of its consumers was clear – all Atkins's avatars are miserable, depressed, exhausted. Of all the artists in Flatness, Atkins

appears the most intent on trying to grapple with Berardi's notion that "the mass production of unhappiness is the topic of our times".

Atkins's 'body' of work was key in the Flatness programme in representing an approach to engaging with digital culture that embraces its technological possibilities while retaining something of the distinctive singularity and critically detached analysis of Asselberghs and Farocki. Crucially, Atkins – like Stark, Marten and the other younger artists in Flatness – isn't overwhelmed by the 'monster of the mainstream'. Indeed, despite their inextricable entanglement within and penetration by its logic of zeroes and ones, they demonstrate a pragmatic determination and desire to symbolically neuter its power. For Khanna, the imperative for this strategy arises because "there is something impossible about the situation with no rational way out or option of refusal other than addressing the problem on its own irrational, impossible terms: by meeting flatness with flatness". In Atkins's film, this strategy results in haunting and haunted works where the visceral, corporeal and seductive nature of the aural and visual surface of his work is radically destabilised from within by the mumbling mantras, the dementia. Aesthetically Atkins's film – like much of the best work in Flatness – is, to borrow a phrase from the publishing house Zero books, popular without being populist.

Elsewhere, Pablo Bronstein's *Constantinople Kaleidoscope* (2012) and Mark Pellegrino's *G.I.R.L.* (2012), shown as part of the Toronto-based video-art distribution company V tape's excellent strand, acted as humorous rejoinders to overestimations of the monstrous power of the digital. The lightness of Bronstein's playful, baroque allegory of the rhizomatic structure of the internet (a sliding performance of magical mirrored reflections, complete with 'pantomime ringmaster') and Pellegrino's use of an old Amiga computer to produce an animated history of the early days of internet porn constituted funny, smart deflations of techno terror.

This was a programme that resolutely refuted and undermined the writer Claire Bishop's recent contestation in *Artforum* that contemporary art has "been curiously unresponsive to the total upheaval in our labour and leisure inaugurated by the digital revolution". All the films screened in Flatness were rooted in an engagement in and critical reflection on the range of psychopathologies now highly visible in our culture. ☀

More than 50 films charted how it feels to be always on the hedonic treadmill of our consumerist-entertainment network

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PLEASURES OF LISBON

Despite the suspension of film production in Portugal for the past year, Indie Lisboa offered plenty of intriguing domestic projects

By Kieron Corless

As much as anything, the tenth anniversary of Indie Lisboa was an opportunity to try and gauge the impact of the ongoing financial crisis both on the festival and on cinema in general in Portugal – together with Greece and Spain, the country experiencing its most convulsive effects. I first attended Indie Lisboa when it was two years old, since when it's expanded, spread its wings and established itself as a key reference point on the European circuit, especially as a barometer of new currents in Portuguese cinema, still the most unjustly overlooked in Europe. Not the least of Indie Lisboa's achievements has been its ability to cater to a broad range of constituencies in the Portuguese capital, from hip twentysomething students to excitable schoolkids to the finickiest of cinephiles, testament to the discerning tastes of its trio (now duo) of artistic directors.

Final attendance figures weren't yet available when I caught up with one of those directors, Nuno Sena, after closing night, but his impression was that they were a tiny bit down, particularly for the more niche titles, mirroring an audience retreat from arthouse cinema generally in Portugal, pretty much in line with everywhere else, including the UK. The question is, can that trend be attributed solely to the economic crisis? Sena was optimistic that the situation could be retrieved and confident that the festival would continue, particularly since the passage of a new cinema law in Portugal that is generally regarded as an improvement on the previous legal framework.

Prior to its passage, film production in Portugal had been suspended for a year or so – not that you'd have guessed that from the substantial number of Portuguese films debuting at the festival, most greenlit before the money dried up (although a few were financed privately – a growing trend in Portugal, according to



Haunted by dictatorship: Michael Wahrmann's *Avanti Popolo*

Sena). Two in particular stood out. *Lacrau*, the second feature by João Vladimiro, won the prize for best Portuguese film – deservedly, and despite stiff competition. It's a meditative docufiction essay on the pitfalls of progress and civilisation, filtered through the experiences of a community of back-to-basics refuseniks settled in the countryside. Its solemnity can be grating but there's no doubting its visual virtuosity and audacity in tackling the big themes.

In Sandro Aguilar's short *Dive: Approach and Exit*, the titular dive is charged with foreboding and mystery. Watching an Aguilar film (his only feature, *A Zona*, showed at the London Film Festival a few years back but there's an extensive back catalogue of shorts) you often feel you're a participant in some strange rite of defamiliarisation, a visual and sonic retuning. It's difficult to think of another director who can manage to knock you so much off-kilter; you're never quite sure where you are or exactly what you're watching but at the same time you're utterly mesmerised thanks to his control of

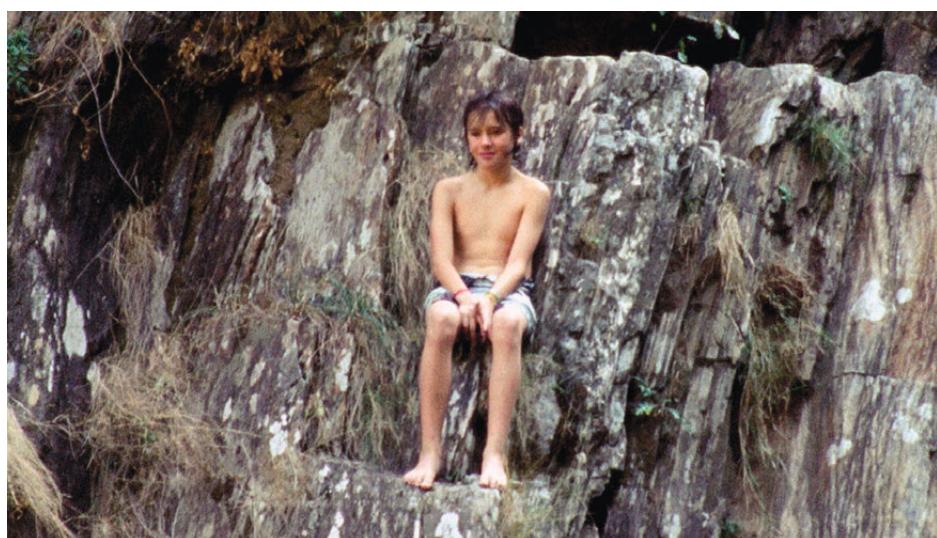
The festival caters to a broad range of constituencies, from hip twentysomethings to excitable schoolkids to finicky cinephiles

mood and atmosphere. Hard to imagine he'll be given the money to make another feature in the current climate, but we can hope.

The Bookseller of Belfast is a medium-length documentary directed by Alessandra Celia and it's a real slow-burning beauty. Various characters intersect, most notably a young punk besotted with an opera aria and an elderly man obsessed with books. One sequence in particular – a night-time rollerskate through a blurry, sodium-lit Belfast night with a Puccini aria on the headphones – elevates it to some sublime level of filmmaking.

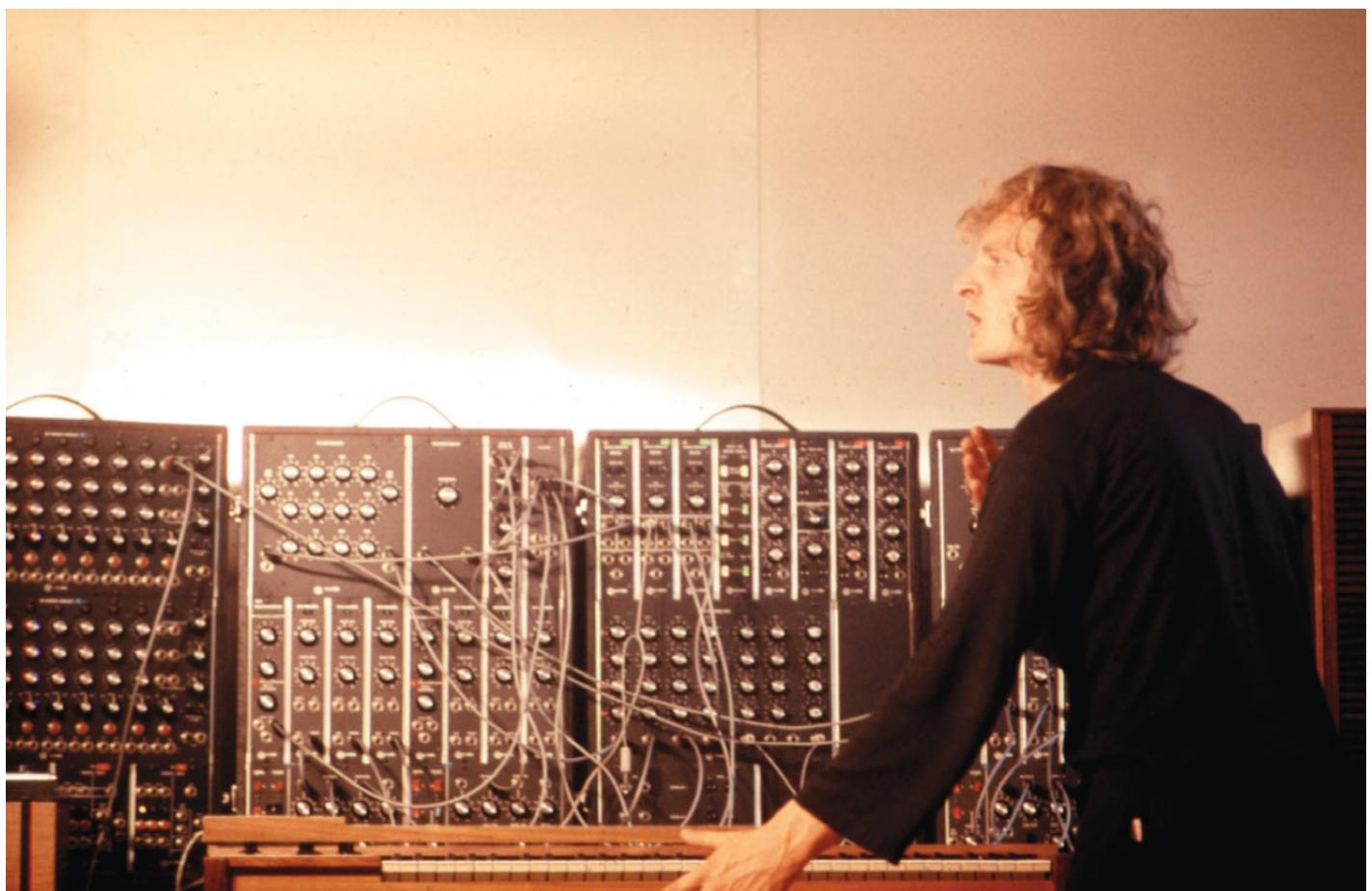
Virgil Vernier's *Orléans* was given short shrift by a few people I spoke to but I thought it too conjured genuine magic in its tale – another docufiction crossover – of a young stripper in Orléans mysteriously drawn towards the figure of Joan of Arc, or at least the girl performing as her in the city's celebrations, or some strange mélange of both.

But the film that made the strongest impact despite its muted address was Michael Wahrmann's debut feature *Avanti Popolo*. It's haunted by memories of the 21-year-long Brazilian dictatorship, which ended in 1985, figured through its impact on one family – a middle-aged divorcee returns to his father's cramped flat – and evoked through super-8 footage shot by a brother who disappeared after a trip to Russia. There's mordant humour in its cleverly juxtaposed elements, especially a missing dog and a budding filmmaker friend. I loved the way it takes its own sweet time, and the extended nocturnal drives through the backstreets of some unnamed city, which seem to inhale a whole continent's worth of pain and desire. ☀



Refusenik paradise: João Vladimiro's prizewinner *Lacrau*

LOOPS ALONG THE RIVER



In the Moog: Popol Vuh founder Florian Fricke, an old friend of Werner Herzog, took the group's name from a Mayan sacred text

The unearthly music of Popol Vuh elevates Werner Herzog's 1972 classic *Aguirre, Wrath of God* to the realm of the mythic

By Stuart Heaney

Werner Herzog's visionary 1972 voyage into the heart of 16th-century colonial madness, *Aguirre, Wrath of God* is now more than 40 years old, yet its transgressive power to astonish remains undiminished. While its uncanny synthesis of brute historical realism and hallucinatory vision quest is primarily rendered in its *mise en scène*, it's Herzog's detailed attention to sound, particularly the unearthly soundtrack music of Popol Vuh, that elevates it to the realm of the mythic.

Taking the name from the eponymous sacred book of the Quiché Mayans of pre-colonised Guatemala, Popol Vuh was founded by Herzog's old friend Florian Fricke. Fricke translated its title as 'Meeting Place', a meeting of minds. It was perhaps inevitable that Herzog would initiate his debut collaboration with Fricke's band on *Aguirre*. Although reputedly ancient, originating in Mayan oral culture, the Popol Vuh was only just being written down at the time in which the film is set.

This admixture of the authentic and the fallacious corresponds with the paradoxical atmosphere of the film. Despite its painstaking authenticity – the actors endured exceptional hardship and were filmed in a visceral

documentary style – *Aguirre* elaborates historical fragments into imaginative fantasy, as conquistadors quest futilely for the mythical city of gold invented by the Incas, El Dorado, following a mutiny led by the tyrannical Aguirre (a tour-de-force performance by the volatile Klaus Kinski, whose offscreen outrages were as notorious as those of his character).

Despite the intensity of Kinski's performance, it is the indifferent landscape that triumphs. The implacable Amazonian jungle is an interiorised landscape mapped out by auditory hallucinations. It's almost as if Popol Vuh's main theme 'Lacrime di Rei', a spectral ostinato soundscape lasting either a mere six minutes or an eternity, dreamed the visual narrative into being and not the other way around. Landscape and soundscape are interchangeable, granting us access into the group mind of this doomed enterprise, dominated by a tyrant's mania.

By 1972, Popol Vuh had released two albums of soundscapes generated by the modular Moog III synthesiser, but Fricke was in the process of abandoning electronic music. The Moog, however, is still present in the 'Lacrime'. In a delicate interplay, it generates the pulse for an instrument that, like a Mellotron, consists of a polyphonic keyboard that plays back magnetic tape loops, pre-recorded at different pitches. Aptly referred to as the 'choir organ', its tape-loops were samples of chanting human voices that, when played, took on an eerie, haunting feel like a celestial choir. It's the sound that

would come to define *Aguirre*'s sonic textures. When I interviewed her in 2010, Fricke's widow Bettina von Waldhausen told me that he had been introduced to the choir organ via its inventor Herbert Prasch, the sound engineer on Herzog's first film *Signs of Life* (1968) – in which he briefly appeared, appropriately, as a pianist.

Referencing sound theorist Michel Chion, the academic Roger Hillman observes that visual content is fixed within the film frame and can only exist on one plane at a time (although practitioners of Expanded Cinema have tried to transcend these limitations through multiple projections). Sound, being invisible, is contained by no such boundaries and pervades the air. "Out of time and out of space, music communicates with all times and all spaces of a film, even as it leaves them to



Aguirre, Wrath of God

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA

their separate and distinct existences," Chion observes. It is this process that Herzog deploys so effectively here, transfiguring realistic images into triggers for states of ecstasy and trance.

Although Chion talks generally of the relationship between the moving image and sound, in this instance it is especially pertinent. While conventional Western music is structured around musical progression, the 'Lacrime' is repetitive and circular. Circularity is a recurring motif throughout the film: soldiers on one of the rafts down the Rio Urubamba get caught in a whirlpool and eventually drown (the actors endured sickness as a result of filming this scene); Kinski repeatedly uses his trademark Kinski Spiral, in which he circles round into shot from behind the camera; even the Rio Urubamba, when viewed on a map, runs in crazy loops all around Machu Picchu.

The uncanny circularity of the music is enhanced by its continually shifting time signature. While the choir organ perpetually repeats its ostinato in 4/4 time, the underlying pulse generated by the Moog synthesiser is syncopated, possibly in 6/8, though there appear to be delay effects that cause the pulse to drift out of time; yet when the chord

Landscape and soundscape are interchangeable, suggesting the group mind of a doomed enterprise dominated by mania

structure repeats, the pulse syncopates on different changes, remaining on the beat.

While Popol Vuh's music partly derives from non-Western folk musics, the cyclical calling of the choir organ simultaneously evokes developments of Christian plainsong quite contemporary to the film's setting: polyphony, in which multiple voices are pitched at differing intervals. In the early 14th century it was banished from the Liturgy by the Catholic church, who feared its potential for dissonance, then considered evil. Later, the 16th-century Spanish composer and priest Tomas Luis de Victoria experimented with dissonant polyphonic intervals more freely than had hitherto been acceptable. It's unlikely that associations of polyphony with evil were conscious intentions during *Aguirre's* production but to the ears of a 16th-century Catholic conqueror such chanting might have sounded simultaneously ethereal and seductively transgressive. This effect of an aesthetic ecstasy that is also a hell is amplified by the preternatural quasi-artificiality of the choir organ.

In *Aguirre's* hallucinatory climax, the sense of human perspective diminishes as the camera begins sweeping around the raft in wide circles and the repetitious ostinato of 'Lacrime di Rei' re-emerges as the film's narrator, Brother Gaspar de Carvajal, writes his final diary entry: "I can no longer write, we are drifting in circles." ☀

i The rereleased *Aguirre, Wrath of God* plays throughout June and into July at BFI Southbank, London, alongside a two-month Werner Herzog's retrospective

Melodramatic acting is often cited as a factor alienating new audiences from silent film. But is the criticism fair?

By Mark Le Fanu

An appreciation of silent film is much more widespread now than it used to be but the factor that most alienates people who might otherwise succumb to its charms remains the notion that acting in those days was melodramatic and exaggerated. If something so vital to the lived experience of going to the cinema is askew in this way, how can there be truth and enjoyment?

It seems to me that this objection (a pretty fundamental one, after all) can be answered in two ways. One can take the line that naturalism is indeed the norm to which cinematic art should aspire and go on to argue that silent cinema is much more naturalistic than one might suppose – at least in certain moments of its development. Or one can take the opposite path and admit that the style of performance in those days was indeed 'exaggerated' while arguing that this is a virtue not a vice since such stylisation constitutes an expressive language in its own right that, in the best instances, is as powerful as any of the subsequent naturalisms that have evolved since the coming of sound.

Both points of view have much to recommend them. But first we must acknowledge that there are times in these early films when the acting is indeed execrable. Whatever the virtues of the great Georges Méliès as a filmmaker (and there are many: his fantasies are visually ravishing) acting is not among them. The ladies simper, the gentlemen throw their umbrellas around; there is a lot of tumbling and barging. From a slightly different angle, the 'high art' offerings of the epoch – costume dramas, historical pageants and so on – also suffered. As a general rule, the more elevated the subject-matter, the more closely a work's protocols approximated those of the stage and the more wooden and unconvincing the end result. These things can be cheerfully admitted.

Where then, and how often, does naturalism come into the picture? It is difficult to generalise; all one can say is that when it is there, you recognise it. Sometimes this truth we are hunting down belongs to a single performer. An actress like the Dane Asta Nielsen would be an interesting example: from her astonishing debut in *Afgrunden* (*The Abyss*, 1910), everything she did had a freshness about it. Sometimes, on the other hand, and equally impressively, it is the signature of a director whose entire work turns out to be infused with this spirit. The founding works of Swedish cinema by Viktor Sjöström seem to me a case in point; another, from the same epoch (roughly, the period between 1915 and 1925) can be ascribed to the five or six

Naturalistic and sophisticated performances are to be found throughout the silent era

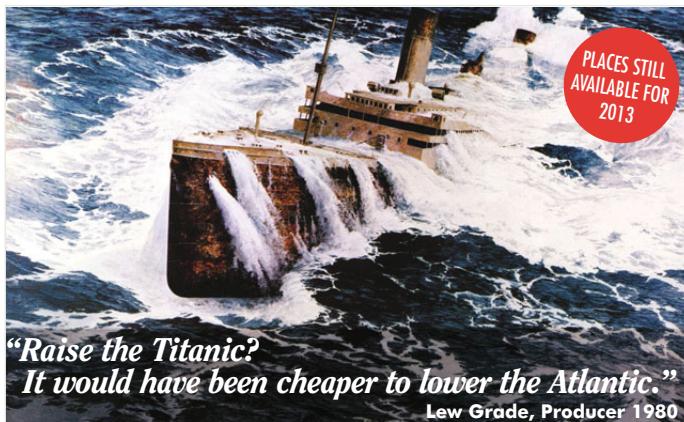


Freshness: Asta Nielsen in 1910's *Afgrunden*

films that constitute the cinematic oeuvre of the French theatre director André Antoine (I hope to come back to him in another article). These are great, serious dramas in which the acting has a mysterious gravity – an authority, an appeal to the spirit, a sense of weight and tradition.

Yet curiously enough – or maybe not so curiously – such naturalism and freshness subsist just as much in comedy. In the great works of Chaplin, Keaton, Arbuckle et al, we admire not just the athleticism of these actors but their sweetness and attentiveness to detail: the real world in all its poverty and forlornness is somehow always present and inspirational, if heightened and stylised appropriately. It used to be a game I played with myself to wonder how far back one could trace, in the film actor's art, this burgeoning sense of aliveness and authenticity. When does one begin to find the first performances that really 'measure up' – measure up to the stage, I mean – in depth and consistency and artistry? I don't think it's there at the beginning – no harm in saying so. But by the time we get to World War I, 20 years or so into cinema's evolution, the conditions are firmly in place.

And it can come out of anywhere. I've already mentioned Asta Nielsen. Last year, among the myriad offerings at Pordenone's Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, we were invited to make the acquaintance of a contemporary of Nielsen's, an Italian actress rather few of us had heard of: Gigetta Morano. The film she appeared in was a frothy little boulevard comedy (1912's *Santarellina*, directed by Mario Caserini) but, by God, Morano took hold of it. The sophistication of her performance, hand in hand with its palpable merriment (its merriment was its sophistication), is for me one more tiny piece of evidence that silent cinema, at its best, is just as capable as sound cinema of piercing the limits of the sublime. ☀



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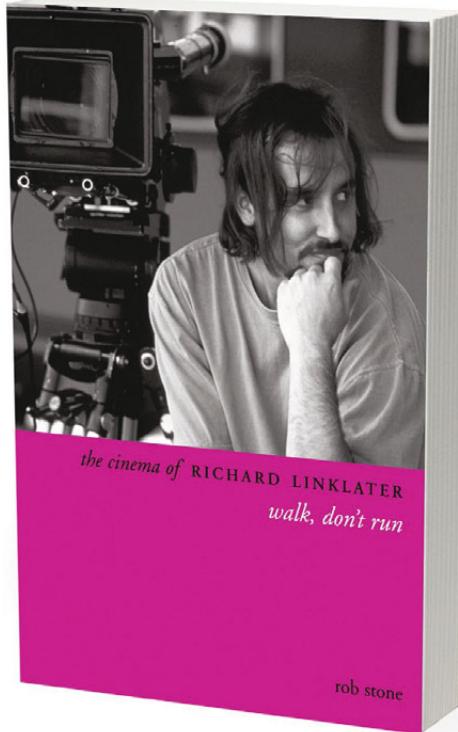
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BALKANS IN THE RAW

A lifetime achievement award at Belgrade highlighted the career of Zelimir Zilnik, from social activism to sci-fi dystopia and art pranks

By Vlastimir Sudar

Last April, Belgrade celebrated the 60th year of its short and documentary film festival, one of the oldest of its kind in the world. The life achievement award went to Zelimir Zilnik, who won his first prizes there back in the 1960s at the beginning of his rich career of uniquely subversive filmmaking, when the festival still carried the prefix 'Yugoslav'. As the festival's history mirrors the turbulent intervening period, so Zilnik's filmography reveals his perspective as a participant and not just a witness with a camera.

Zilnik's early films epitomise the radical spirit of the 1960s, recalling Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas's work in Argentina, or Jean-Luc Godard's collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin, when cinema was perceived as a weapon of social change. These early shorts cry on behalf of the disenfranchised and document glaring social problems, such as the searing issue of child prostitution and delinquency in *Little Pioneers* (*Pioniri maleni*, 1968).

When student revolts inflamed Belgrade in 1968, Zilnik made his short documentary *June turmoil* (*Lipanjška gibanja*) as a preamble to his first major success and became an archetypal *soixante-huitard* in the process. His first fiction film *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*, 1969 – the title refers to Karl Marx's first group of essays) featured a gang of rebellious youth: three guys and a girl ominously called Yugoslava. Played by Milja Vujanović, then recently crowned Miss Yugoslavia, she leads this motley crew through the backwaters of the Yugoslav countryside proselytising Communist ideas. They are continuously rejected and Yugoslava ends up killed and burnt by her incestuous revolutionaries.

Zilnik here established his trademark docudrama *vérité* style of fiction that looked like documentary; his documentaries, meanwhile, were structured like fiction. The film was a classic of its type, avant-garde in form and heavily political in content. This admixture of oppositional East European style and revolutionary cinema as practised in the West won the film a Golden Bear in Berlin in 1969 and it remains one of the best examples of Yugoslav Black Wave cinema and of such filmmaking in general.

Armed with a degree in law, Zilnik frequently confronted attempts at censorship and went to court whenever his polemical films were repressed. President Tito eventually clamped down and, like many other Black Wave directors in the early 1970s (including his mentor Dušan Makavejev), Zilnik left Yugoslavia. He spent the mid-70s in Germany, where he realised that filmmakers were suppressed not only in the Communist East but equally, if more gently, in the liberal-capitalist West. Zilnik exposed the first social problem he encountered: the strained relationship of the German state towards its 'guest' workforce. Facing further censorship,



Fallen idol: Zilnik's first feature *Early Works* starred a recently crowned Miss Yugoslavia

Zilnik's filmography reveals his perspective as a participant, not just a witness, in Yugoslavia, Germany and Serbia

he soon returned home to settle in television.

Although the 1980s seem like Zilnik's serene period, his popular sci-fi dystopia *Pretty Women Walking through the City* (*Lijepe žene prolaze kroz grad*, 1986) emphasised Yugoslavia's composition of interrelated but not always harmonious ethnic groups. With the country's demise, Zilnik's films again revealed his razor-sharp critical wit. His conceptual art-prank *Tito among the Serbs for the Second Time* (*Tito po drugi put medju Srbinima*, 1994) followed an actor dressed in President Tito's military regalia through the streets of a Belgrade depressed by economic sanctions and war. As the hapless citizens approach 'Tito' to talk to him, the impending strife and confusion of the transition to capitalism are unmistakable.

Zilnik's critique is apparent not only in his self-reflexive observations on the current state of the Balkans but also in his scrutiny of the peninsula's relation to its enclosing and economically overbearing neighbour, the European Union.

Kenedi Goes Back Home (*Kenedi se vrača kući*, 2003) follows a Roma boy's forced repatriation to Serbia after the war's end, after being brought up as a Kosovar refugee in Germany. While readjusting to life in his homeland, he thinks of the adoptive one in which he lived but to which he is no longer allowed to return. In the two *Kenedi* sequels, as well as his other films of this period, Zilnik explores the idea encapsulated in the title of his landmark earlier film *Fortress Europe* (*Tvrđava Evropa*, 2000).

Social exclusion and marginalisation – this time enforced by the self-proclaimed stronghold of human rights, the EU – remain the focus for this filmmaker, who was born in a Nazi concentration camp in Niš, southern Serbia, in 1942. The camp was set up for captured resistance fighters and Zilnik's mother – a communist – was incarcerated while pregnant. Brought up by his grandparents in Novi Sad in the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina, where he still lives, it is no wonder that his films brusquely attack any kind of repression. Even if sometimes didactic, gratuitous or exploitative, Zilnik's raw and visceral cinema is nevertheless one of transgression: uncompromisingly subversive and nonconformist, it reminds us of the time when filmmaking was an adventure that could bring both social and personal liberation. S



Little Pioneers



Zilnik, right, in his 1971 short *Black Film*

MARIN KARMITZ AND KENZO HORIKOSHI PRESENT



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"The great surprise of Cannes... Thrilling"
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"A wondrous film" Richard Brody, THE NEW YORKER

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"Not many films so directly address the Human Condition as *The Wall*... a solo **TOUR DE FORCE** for Martina Gedeck... a mesmerising, philosophically rich drama about solitude and the things that keep us human... stunningly original." JONATHAN ROMNEY, LONDON FILM FESTIVAL

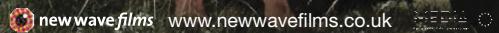
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IN CINEMAS 5 JULY



Reviews



79 **The Moth Diaries**

The redeeming feature of the film is Lily Cole as a vampire. With her huge eyes and tiny mouth (showing sharp teeth), she is the sort of actress who is going to be cast as an alien or supernatural creature more often than as a regular human being



62 Films of the month



70 Films



94 Home Cinema



104 Books



Note perfect: Michael Douglas incarnates showman Liberace in Steven Soderbergh's *Behind the Candelabra*

Behind the Candelabra

Director: Steven Soderbergh
Certificate 15 118m 23s

Reviewed by Roger Clarke

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist
The directorial swansong of Steven Soderbergh, *Behind the Candelabra* is a biopic of the showman and pianist Liberace, once the highest paid musician in the world. After a lifetime spent denying his homosexuality and suing those who wrote about it, Liberace died of Aids in 1987 – and his secret was out.

The film begins in 1977 with a sonic blast from Donna Summer, as we meet the young Scott Thorson (Soderbergh regular Matt Damon), who's working as an animal handler on a commercials set when a chance hook-up in a gay bar with a rather swish Scott Bakula leads him backstage at a Liberace show in Vegas. The musician is played, on effete hiatus, by Michael Douglas. Before you know it, Thorson is installed in the über-bling Liberace house, kitted out in a chauffeur's uniform and driving the Rolls-Royce on stage at the Vegas shows. Liberace's Polish mother Frances, incarnated by Debbie Reynolds,

is never far away, hovering like an unspoken reproach. The relationship between Thorson and Liberace, played out in plain sight yet also completely secret, lasts five years. But inevitably, as Thorson ages, Liberace's eye wanders – he has an insatiable appetite for young men. Wounded, Thorson succumbs to cocaine addiction and an amphetamine-induced slimming programme known with sly precision as the 'California Diet'. He's kicked out, sues, settles, and goes to work for the postal service in West Hollywood.

The title *Behind the Candelabra* comes from Thorson's own account of those years together. The image of a candelabra carefully placed on a grand piano was a key piece of branding for Liberace – he even incorporated it into his written signature – and the movie is careful to mention its origins: it's taken from a Chopin biopic made by Charles Vidor in 1945, in which the composer has a candelabra on his piano. For Liberace it suggested Poland, style and a bit of class, and perhaps even a touch of tubercular tragedy. (Chopin's music is played in the movie.)

Thorson exchanged the gold-plated Rolls-Royce Liberace gave him for a mountain of cocaine, but the film leaves out some of the wilder parts of his book – including his witnessing the events leading up to the Laurel

Canyon gangland murders of 1981, which were depicted in the 2003 Val Kilmer film *Wonderland* (Thorson gave evidence at the subsequent trial of Eddie Nash). Thorson has consistently denied that he's gay, which doesn't quite square with the thesis of this movie.

Both Damon and Soderbergh have said that they want this to be a love story, but in truth it's hard to see the love. This Liberace displays thick layers of sugared neediness that wouldn't disgrace a Polish *murzynek* cake, though there are moments of genuine tenderness in the bedroom scenes, and we understand that Liberace is genuinely touched by Scott's sad backstory – he was an orphaned foster-child. But there's also the chilling response to his mother's death: "I'm free!" This isn't the "winking... heap of mother love" of the famous *Daily Mirror* libel of 1956, when Liberace successfully sued the newspaper for implying that he was gay.

Douglas brings a preening, nervous energy to a performance that may well prove to be the best of his career; his real-life health problems give a genuine air of mortality to his physical presence, the furs and glittering clothes hanging on him like a snake about to shed its skin. If there is one criticism of Douglas's performance it's that he never quite shows the charm of the man,



There's a genuine air of mortality to Douglas's physical presence, the furs and glittering clothes hanging on him like a snake about to shed its skin

for the purposes of the drama in hand, more isolated and more distant than he was in real life. Damon, meanwhile, plays his Thorson slightly numb and along for the ride, and seems entirely passive, except in the sack. The craziness is, one suspects, very toned down from what really went on. There's an exemplary supporting cast, with Dan Aykroyd almost unrecognisable as Liberace's manager Seymour Heller; cast completely against type, he's especially good in a villainous role.

Soderbergh's Liberace avoids the dilemmas of his life by hard work, and the director cleverly creates an early scene which shows off the skill of the man, spotlight on hands as he whirs through a boogie-woogie number. The recording is of Liberace himself, but we have no doubt that Douglas is playing it. The scenes at home, often in a hot-tub or watching old videos of himself, induce a sense of perfumed claustrophobia.

This is a well-made film, produced for HBO after Soderbergh failed to secure mainstream funding on the grounds that the subject-matter was 'too gay'. It's in the tradition of the director's more sexually charged films, such as *Full Frontal* (2002) or even *sex, lies, and videotape* (1989), whose title perfectly sums up Liberace's downtime at home. The first part of the film is played, sometimes rather uncomfortably, for laughs, inducing a queasy sense of sniggering at the silly fags. Technically it's immaculate, moving easily between broad strokes and small ones – suggesting Learjet travel via a few blurred images, for example, or hiding Damon's age in the early scenes (he's 41 playing 16) with an effect somewhat akin to – there's no other way of saying this – Vaseline on the lens.

It's highly tempting to project Soderbergh's own public disillusionment with Hollywood on to this story about a gilded cage and the corrupting power of showbiz and money. There is a kind of funereal grandeur at work here, a powerful voodoo sense of summoning ghosts, confirmed by the revelation in the press notes that both Reynolds and Douglas knew Liberace (Reynolds was part of an inner

the softness of his face and manner, which you can see in any YouTube video. Nor does the film ever elaborate on his legendary rapport with his audience, whom he would invite on stage at the end of his shows. (He appears, too, to have been rather more generous to Thorson than is shown in the film.) The Soderbergh Liberace is necessarily,



In the gilded cage: Liberace with younger lover Scott Thorson (Matt Damon)

circle) and that the boogie-woogie scene involved his two pianos reunited, for the first time since his death, on the Vegas stage where he played them; the LA apartment too was Liberace's own, and the post-office desk in West Hollywood is also the actual place where Thorson worked after the party was over.

The script is by Richard LaGravenese (*The Fisher King*, *The Bridges of Madison County*), who brings economy to a gloriously bedizened subject-matter. Particular mention must go to costume designer Ellen Mirojnick, whose task was at once easy and difficult. A long-time collaborator of Douglas's, Mirojnick had special access to the original costumes and jewels at the Liberace Museum, but had to recreate them in much lighter materials. (For one of his entrances, Liberace wore a \$300,000 white fox coat lined in \$100,000 worth of sequins and crystals, with a 16-foot train; it weighed a hundred pounds.)

Reviewers often search for amusing juxtapositions to explain a movie's essence, and for *Behind the Candelabra* it would probably be *Mommie Dearest* meets *Salò*. Soderbergh ends the movie with exemplary grace, solving the puzzle of how to avoid a downbeat conclusion with a solution that would have made Derek Jarman proud – the funeral in Palm Springs (partly filmed at the actual church) becomes an exhilarating ascension into gay heaven, with the ceremony turning into a fantastical extravaganza in the mind of Thorson – who is rendered alone in the church as the show unfurls. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jerry Weintraub

Screenplay
Richard LaGravenese

Based on the book
by Scott Thorson
with Alex Thorleifson

**Director of
Photography**
Peter Andrews

[i.e. Steven
Soderbergh]

Editor
Mary Ann Bernard

[i.e. Steven
Soderbergh]

**Production
Designer**
Howard Cummings

Music Adapted by
Marvin Hamlisch

Costume Designer
Ellen Mirojnick

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**Production
Companies**
HBO Films presents
a Jerry Weintraub
production

**Executive
Producers**
Gregory Jacobs

Susan Ekins

Michael Polaire

Dan Aykroyd
Seymour Heller
Scott Bakula
Bob Black
Rob Lowe
Dr Jack Startz
Debbie Reynolds
Frances Liberace

In Colour
[178:1]

Distributor
E1 Films

10,654 ft +8 frames

Cast
Michael Douglas
Liberace
Matt Damon
Scott Thorson

Los Angeles, 1977. Teenager Scott Thorson picks up choreographer Bob Black in a gay bar. On a weekend getaway to Las Vegas, Bob takes Scott to the Hilton, where the pianist Liberace is playing a sold-out show. Liberace and Scott are instantly attracted to each other, and Liberace is further charmed by Scott's rapport with his beloved lapdogs. Quitting his work as a dog-handler for commercials, Scott moves in with Liberace. Though he is viewed with chilly scepticism by the star's manager Seymour Heller, Scott becomes Liberace's chauffeur. Liberace, wanting to adopt Scott as his 'son', insists on Scott having plastic surgery to give his face a family resemblance. Trying to lose weight to keep his looks, Scott develops a drug habit. The relationship between the two men deteriorates after five years together, and Scott is replaced by a younger man while he's away at his foster-mother's funeral. He is kicked out of the LA apartment. Suing for palimony, he settles for a derisory amount.

Sometime later, Scott, now working for the postal service in West Hollywood, receives a phone call from Liberace, who is dying of Aids. There is some rapprochement between them. When Liberace dies, his secret life is finally revealed to the world. At his funeral, a fantasy sequence suggests his ascendance to kitsch heaven.

The Bling Ring

USA/United Kingdom/Japan/Germany 2013
Director: Sofia Coppola
Certificate 15 90m 25s

Reviewed by Isabel Stevens

In Sofia Coppola's latest musing on celebrity, she finally steps outside the gilded-cage setting of her previous three features, only to look back inside with lust and greed. *The Bling Ring* fictionalises the now notorious case of the high-school gang who over the course of a year from October 2008 effortlessly burgled the LA homes of stars including Paris Hilton, Orlando Bloom and Lindsay Lohan, stealing designer goods worth more than \$3 million.

After Harmony Korine and his riotous, eerie fairytale *Spring Breakers*, Coppola is the second fortysomething American filmmaker this year to have the zeitgeist of pop culture in their sights; the second to tell us overwhelmingly that the kids are not all right and to attack the decadence and posturing of privileged, morally bankrupt white teenagers with more decadence and posturing. *The Bling Ring* opens with the posse leaping a fence, flipping up their hoods in unison as if in a music video, before walking into an unlocked mansion to commence their looting. As they do so a piercing siren rings out – however it's not a security alarm but the film's soundtrack blasting out.

In an attempt to stop the actual fame-courting

With a cameo not only from Paris Hilton but also the interior of her Hollywood mansion, 'The Bling Ring' dips its manicured toes into some murky waters

convicts gaining any more notoriety, Coppola has changed their names, but the burgled celebrities' identities loom large: at times images of the stars in their red-carpet attire fill the screen in rapid slideshows mimicking the experience of online style- and gossip-grazing. Featuring a cameo not only from Paris Hilton herself but also the interior of her actual Hollywood mansion, *The Bling Ring* certainly dips its manicured toes into some murky waters. Can Coppola – who has modelled and designed handbags for Louis Vuitton and who has the kind of wardrobe that would have been highly coveted by these teens were she the type to leave her door open and tweet her whereabouts – really probe the workings of the hyper-materialist celebrity machine? The thank-you in the credits to all the luxury brands for their cooperation suggests otherwise. But it's a film that toys with *Cribs*-esque voyeuristic desires – laughing along with the burglars' squeals when they find Hilton's cushions emblazoned with the heiress's own face – while at the same time managing to stare long and hard into a moral vacuum.

Gone are the minimalism and dreamy ennui of *Lost in Translation* (2003) and *Somewhere* (2010). Coppola's characters are no longer rich, melancholy drifters but brittle, desirous things who have their career paths plotted: an internship at *Teen Vogue*, with the ultimate goal of a modelling contract or reality-TV fame. As always, Coppola is in her element when sketching the details, her camera hanging out

with the frappuccino-sipping, coke-sniffing HBIC Rebecca (Katie Chang), celeb-in-waiting Nicki (Emma Watson) and their posse, who cruise around LA in flash cars and would fit right in in Bret Easton Ellis's *Less Than Zero* if only his 80s teen hedonists could rap along to Kanye.

Just like Coppola's 2006 film *Marie Antoinette*, *The Bling Ring* is perfectly accessorised, with identically tousled manes and oversized sunglasses and just the right amount of slinky hip-hop anthems lusting after Gucci bags balanced with self-aware songs about the pitfalls of such a lifestyle. Meanwhile the script, based on a *Vanity Fair* article about the robberies, often quotes the real-life perpetrators verbatim. (As unbelievable as Watson's gushing, *Oprah*-inspired "I want to learn" speeches that bookend the film sound, this isn't caricature.) When the clique are out rifling through celebrities' wardrobes, the swaggering and OMG screeching borrows straight from shopping vlogs. At times in the past, Coppola's sense of humour has been both cruel and lazy, as when wielded against the vapid showbiz hangers-on of *Somewhere* and an entire country in *Lost in Translation*. It is just as obvious here but all-pervasive, targeting celebrity and wannabe alike. The film's mocking sociological gaze brings to mind comedies like *Clueless* (1995) and *Mean Girls* (2004), but the coiffured princesses of those movies go on moral journeys and dream of that rather outdated fixation of teen stories: romance.

Endlessly strutting, preening and pouting for photographs, Coppola's burglar bunch have no time for love, just themselves. The only character with anything resembling emotions and self-doubt ("I'm not an A-list-looking kind of guy") is baby-faced new kid Marc, whose reflections punctuate the film and whose perspective, as he's taken under the wing of the manipulative Rebecca, Coppola tags along with. Inducted into stealing wallets from unlocked cars before taking on the role of Rebecca's minion, locating at her command the addresses of celebrities, Marc is the only one to feel scared during their burglaries. Moral corruption is all too clear to see in Coppola's film – which throughout shows the teens noting celebrities' DUI charges in the same way they check out their clothes, before shrugging off their own drunken car crash and resulting conviction.

When Coppola is out on the rampage with the ring, she does everything to immerse us in the thrill of the raid, poring over rows of handbags and sparkling wardrobes. Yet the most interesting scenes are when she ventures beyond incredulity at the gang's actions (Nicki's 12-year-old sister breaking and entering through



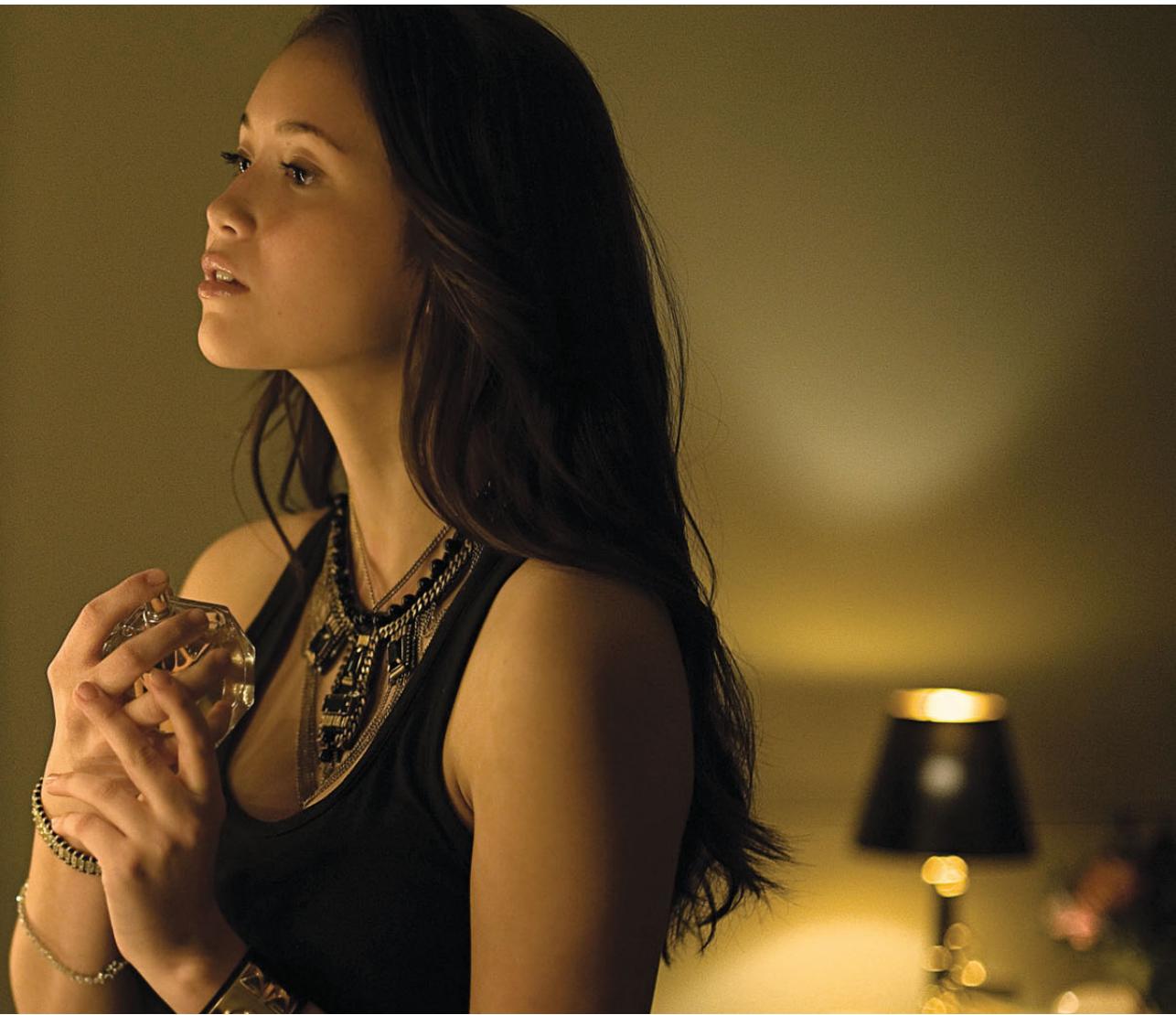
Gimme the loot: bling ring leader Rebecca (Katie Chang)

a dog flap!) and zeros in on them writhing around on the celebrities' beds, stealing their underwear, reading their love letters, pretending to actually be them – all this a natural extension of following every moment of their lives to date.

While *The Bling Ring* does share a similar gun scene with *Spring Breakers* (though it's not nearly as potent), Coppola doesn't choose violence and weirdness to disrupt her film in the way Korine does, but the distancing tactics of long takes – one exterior shot of a mansion, observed as the silhouetted Marc and Rebecca burgle it with the LA night-time skyline twinkling behind,



The burglar bunch: Marc, Nicki, Sam, Rebecca and Chloe show off their stolen goods



is a complete reversal of perspective. Another observes Rebecca spraying perfume while looking into a mirror, almost in a state of rapture.

In *The Bling Ring* the typical Sofia Coppola empathy quandary is even more acute than normal (and all the more interesting for it). To side with Marc would be to regard him as a victim, and Coppola deftly avoids that, wary of allowing such a simple interpretation (and one so often courted by errant celebrities). Where Coppola's mission falters is when she leaves the gang to survey Nicki's home life. Observing Leslie Mann in overdrive as Nicki's Angelina Jolie-worshipping mother as she home-schools her daughters with self-help mantras and later even cheers Nicki on to her court appearance ("You rock!"), Coppola's dispassionate stance slips and she drives the knife in too hard. The best moments in Coppola's films so far have been when tender emotion breaks through her ethereal moodscapes (memorably the longings of Elle Fanning as the young daughter in *Somewhere*). *The Bling Ring's* final scenes – Nicki making the most of her short jail term by promoting herself on a talk show, the remorseful Marc shuffling along in chains – are unsure whether to court sadness or horror at the state of things. As Nicki announces the address of her website to camera, the finale is not as devastating as it wants to be. It's a shame that Coppola, who peered into celebrity's toxic soul, now falls back on easy parody. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Roman Coppola

Sofia Coppola

Youree Henley

Written by

Sofia Coppola

Based on the Vanity Fair article by Nancy Jo Sales

Directors of Photography

Harris Savides

Christopher Blauvelt

Film Editor

Sarah Flack

Production Designer

Anne Ross

Original Music

Brian Reitzell

Sound Mixer

Susumu Tokunow

Costume Designer

Stacey Battat

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Production Companies

NALA Films presents

in association with Pathé Distribution, Tohokushinsha Film Corporation, Tobis Film GmbH & Co. KG, StudioCanal Limited and FilmNation Entertainment

an American Zoetrope/NALA

Films production

Executive Producers

Emilio Diez Barroso

Darlene Caamaño

Loquet

Francis Ford Coppola

Paul Rassam

Fred Roos

Mike Zakin

Cast

Emma Watson

Nicki

Taissa Farmiga

Sam

Israel Broussard

Marc

Claire Julien

Chloe

Katie Chang

Rebecca

Leslie Mann

Laurie

Georgia Rock

Emily

Carlos Miranda

Rob

Gavin Rossdale

Ricky

Stacy Edwards

Marc's mom

G. Mac Brown

Henry

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor

StudioCanal Limited

8,137 ft +8 frames

LA, present day. A group of wealthy teenagers – Rebecca, Marc, Chloe, Nicki and her adopted sister Sam – burgle an unlocked celebrity mansion. Later Nicki tells reporters about her aspirations for the future.

One year earlier. Nicki and Sam are being homeschooled by their celebrity-obsessed mother. The insecure Marc starts at a new high school, where he's treated frostily by other students but befriended by Rebecca, the pair bonding over their love of fashion. Marc meets Rebecca's friends Chloe, Nicki and Sam – and is introduced to their pastime of thieving wallets from unlocked cars. At Rebecca's suggestion, she and Marc burgle the empty house of one of Marc's friends, stealing money and designer goods.

Rebecca decides to visit Paris Hilton's home. Marc finds out online where Hilton lives and discovers that she will be away that evening. He and Rebecca find the house unlocked and burgle it, taking only a few possessions whose absence won't be noticed. They burgle the homes of more celebrities, including TV star

Audrina Patridge; they are nearly caught by security guards but are undeterred. They take the rest of their gang on a tour of Hilton's home and steal more of her possessions. Hooked, they target more stars – Megan Fox, Rachel Bilson, Orlando Bloom and Miranda Kerr – becoming bolder in what they take, stealing cash, jewellery, underwear, artwork and even a handgun. They keep some of the loot and sell the rest to fund drug- and drink-fuelled nights out. The group openly boast about their conquests at a party.

CCTV footage of Marc and Rebecca burgling Patridge's home is shown on the news, but Rebecca calms a worried Marc and convinces him to burgle Lindsay Lohan's house. She then goes to live with her father in Las Vegas, leaving Marc with many of her stolen possessions. Marc, Nicki, Chloe and Rebecca are arrested after stolen property is found in their homes. Marc confesses everything and they all receive jail sentences. Nicki, released after serving only a month of her sentence, appears on a talk show to discuss her prison experience.



One of those rare smiles: Leonardo DiCaprio plays the title character in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby*

The Great Gatsby

Australia/USA 2013

Director: Baz Luhrmann
Certificate 12A 143m 0s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Jay Gatsby is an outsized part that requires a movie star, in the classical, Valentino sense. F Scott Fitzgerald laid down a big drumroll build-up before his title character, the mysterious host of West Egg's maddest parties, finally appeared in his novel. This is nothing, however, compared to the ballyhoo in Baz Luhrmann's film before he finally whips the tarp off Gatsby. He appears, and it's Leonardo DiCaprio, as we knew it would be and as it seems it must be, and 'Rhapsody in Blue' plays and fireworks burst, and it's all very silly and suddenly touching when DiCaprio smiles. Like much in Luhrmann's *Great Gatsby*, like Gatsby, the reveal is too much, and more than a little moving in its excess.

"It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself," narrator Nick Carraway says of Gatsby's smile in Fitzgerald's text – a quote that appears verbatim in the film, along with many others. Which is not to say that the novel is scrupulously followed in every detail. In one of the innovations of Luhrmann and long-time collaborator Craig Pearce's screenplay, Tobey Maguire's Carraway is introduced recovering at a sanatorium, far away from the New York scene and the riotous summer that wrecked his nerves.

This little addition does not, I think, add much to our understanding of Carraway and has the odour of English-class discussions of 'is Holden Caulfield writing from an asylum?' about it. For many, it will be enough to prove

that lurid Luhrmann has made a hash of one of the finest novels written in the United States. It takes \$100 million to make an accident! Did Pat Hobby write this script? O, huge incoherent failure! But I keep going back to DiCaprio's Jay Gatsby. Gatsby, the poor boy who fell in love with a rich girl named Daisy, and who, to curry her favour, reinvented himself as a gentleman – in the memorable formulation of H.L. Mencken, "a young man with a great deal of mysterious money, the tastes of a movie actor and, under it all, the simple sentimentality of a somewhat sclerotic fat woman".

Leonardo DiCaprio became very rich by playing a star-crossed lover in Luhrmann's 1996 *Romeo + Juliet* and a poor boy in love with a rich girl in James Cameron's 1997 *Titanic*. Cameron reported that he had clashed with DiCaprio over the rather straightforward romantic lead that he'd asked the actor to play, telling him: "I'm not going to make this guy brooding and neurotic and I'm not going to give him a hump and a tic and a twitch and a limp and all the other things that you want." The resulting performance granted DiCaprio phenomenal *Tiger Beat* popularity, and this was evidently an embarrassment to an actor who harboured aspirations to be a serious tragedian despite his pretty, untrammeled face. So DiCaprio used his newfound clout and spent most of the next 15 years locating projects in which he would be scoured and tormented, his features crumpled with angst until all hint of callow youth had been stamped out. Only Mickey Rourke was more thorough.

This is why that smile is so astonishing. DiCaprio has allowed himself to be radiant again here. It is a different kind of beauty now, for he is a long way from 22, and the residue of the past 15 years of ceaseless suffering remains on

his face – so much the better. The self-invented Gatsby is a palimpsest; DiCaprio's delicate, transparent performance allows us glimpses of the erased character. Gatsby's fidgeting is a wavering between hopeful self-determination and self-doubt; for all his genius, Gatsby suspects that the chasm he has set his mind to leaping may be unbridgeable. This anxiety manifests in punctilious stiffness – those compulsive "old sports" – and beneath the blithe clubman veneer you can see a man stiflingly aware of the impression he is making, on guard. DiCaprio has never been finer, and only once does he really break in the style we've come to expect of him, a flare-up when challenged by the husband of his beloved Daisy, where he turns just as pink as the pinstripe suit he's wearing.

Joel Edgerton plays Daisy's brutish, to-the-manner-born husband Tom Buchanan, freed from obligation to keep up appearances by his pedigree. It's the only performance overshadowed by one in Jack Clayton's etiolated 1974 *Gatsby*, which had Bruce Dern in the part. Carey Mulligan, Luhrmann's Daisy, does well in drawing out the equivocation of the role – she shows an inkling of the glittering prize that Gatsby sees in her, yet never gives too much away, for it is the cautious WASP credo of 'spend the interest and don't touch the principal' that Daisy, on an emotional level, embodies. Mulligan's performance comes across, perhaps by necessity, more hazily than Elizabeth Debicki's Jordan Baker, the book's cheating golf pro and Nick's occasional lady companion.

With her slinky, bosomless frame, Debicki is as sleek as an art-deco ornament, and I would've welcomed more of both her and Indian superstar Amitabh Bachchan, who lends his grave suavity to the role of Jewish gambler Meyer Wolfsheim. That bit of casting is more than a

token outreach to the subcontinent market. Luhrmann's conception of the Roaring 20s takes much from Bollywood, as well as from Studio 54 and Jay-Z's 'Big Pimpin' – any excess will do. Where Clayton's *Gatsby* was an East Egg film, steeped in the limpid manners of the entrenched aristocracy, Luhrmann's is a tacky, arriviste West Egg film of "spectroscopic gayety". Luhrmann splurges in party scenes, which are a brocaded chaos of confetti, streamers, butterfly ceiling hangings, gushing champagne – here the 3D almost justifies the price-gouge, with Luhrmann layering manifold textures like Josef von Sternberg given carte blanche.

Gatsby's West Egg home is spoken of as resembling a theme park or the World's Fair. Its pointy turrets suggest the Magic Kingdom; its terraced gardens are almost confectionary. The property was acquired, as you may remember, for the view it provides of the Buchanan home in East Egg, and Luhrmann takes great pleasure in swooshing across aching distances, skimming over misty Manhasset Bay. One of this *Gatsby's* delights is the way it finds cinematic gestures befitting the book's mythologised Greater New York geography, following the careening, suicidal to-and-fro voyages from a Manhattan of the imagination in *Gatsby's* huge yellow land-yacht of a car. Resurrected through CG, nothing in this lost city is remotely plausible – but the weightlessness of pixel-based art is a boon here, for Fitzgerald's idea of the period as a sort of mass-hallucination fits the way the actors swim through ethereal environments – a rooftop tea-garden or a Times Square dominated by a faceless Arrow Collar ad which takes on a mysterious import when reflected in a cab window. The uncanniness of this high-definition unreality crests early, in a moment when Carraway looks out of the suite where he is presently ensnared in a party – and looks down to see himself looking back up from the street.

"I was within and without," says Carraway – and so too is Luhrmann's movie inside

Luhrmann splurges in party scenes, which are a chaos of confetti and champagne... He layers textures like Josef von Sternberg given carte blanche



Friends reunited: Gatsby with lost love Daisy Buchanan (Carey Mulligan)

and outside its period, its pastiche 1920s fed through the filter of contemporary greed and celebrity-culture fecklessness. Maguire has known DiCaprio from their days as child actors, and watching them hitting a speakeasy together brings back reminiscences of the high, heady days of the Pussy Posse. This ostensible indictment of the rich's "vast carelessness" comes with Brooks Brothers and Tiffany's tie-ins, and a Jay-Z 'executive-produced' soundtrack whose leadoff single is Lana Del Rey's 'Young and Beautiful' – the product of a marketing conspiracy whose complex, sinister mechanism would boggle Scott Fitzgerald's imagination.

Yet it is a fact that every cautionary tale must also be an invitation, truer than ever in tantalisingly visual cinema. Fitzgerald's novel, whose shining world seduces and abandons the reader, would not be great if it did not risk appearing as a celebration of the very thing that it despises. Luhrmann's *Gatsby* owes much of its frisson to the tension between the director's destructive extravagance and the melancholy optimism of DiCaprio's Gatsby, as different as Saturday night and Sunday morning. It is not the novel, no, but happy to report, the madly embattled result is a real movie. ☺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by	Iloura Industrial Light & Magic Method Studios	Carey Mulligan Daisy Buchanan Joel Edgerton Tom Buchanan Jason Clarke George Wilson Isla Fisher Myrtle Wilson Amitabh Bachchan Meyer Wolfshiem Elizabeth Debicki Jordan Baker Jack Thompson Dr Walter Perkins
Screenplay	©Bazmark Film III Pty Limited	Dolby Digital/ Datacap/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1]
Production Companies	Warner Bros. Pictures presents in association with Village Roadshow Pictures and A&E Television	Some screenings presented in 3D
Director of Photography	a Bazmark/ Red Wagon Entertainment production	Distributor Warner Bros. Distributors (UK)
Production Designer	A film by Baz Luhrmann	12,870 ft + 0 frames
Editors	Craig Pearce	
Original Score	Matt Villa Jason Ballantine Jonathan Redmond	
Supervising Sound Editor/ Sound Designer	Catherine Martin	
Costume Designer	Craig Armstrong	
Visual Effects	Barrie M. Osborne Bruce Berman Shawn 'Jay Z' Carter	
Animal Logic		
Prime Focus		
Rising Sun Pictures		
Cast	Nick Carraway	
Leonardo DiCaprio	Jay Gatsby	
Tobey Maguire	Tobey Maguire	
Cast	Nick Carraway	
Leonardo DiCaprio		
Tobey Maguire		

US, the 1920s. Now housed in a sanatorium, recovering alcoholic Nick Carraway recalls the summer when he first arrived in New York from Yale, renting a cottage on Long Island, across the bay from his cousin Daisy and her husband, former star athlete Tom Buchanan. Nick's neighbour is the much whispered-about Jay Gatsby, who frequently opens his palatial mansion for lavish, legendary parties. Shortly after meeting Tom's mistress Myrtle, the wife of a Queens mechanic, Nick is invited to one of Gatsby's parties. There he makes the acquaintance of Gatsby himself, who befriends him. An ulterior motive is soon evident, for Gatsby wants to use Nick as a go-between to arrange a rendezvous with Daisy, whom Gatsby courted when she was a Louisville belle and he a soldier, before their socially mismatched romance was broken off. They fall back into one another's arms, eventually arousing Tom's suspicions. Accusations fly when Tom reveals his knowledge of Gatsby's low-born origins. That evening, when racing home from the city, the car carrying Daisy and Gatsby strikes and kills Myrtle. Tom puts her crestfallen husband George on Gatsby's tail and, as he waits for Daisy to come to him, Gatsby is shot and killed in his swimming pool. His death is mired in scandal, and his funeral unattended.



The go-between: narrator Nick Carraway (Tobey Maguire) with Jordan Baker (Elizabeth Debicki)



Shakespeare in love: Alexis Denisof and Amy Acker as Benedick and Beatrice in Joss Whedon's modern-day *Much Ado About Nothing*

Much Ado About Nothing

USA 2012

Director: Joss Whedon

Certificate 12A 108m 0s

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

"Man is a giddy thing," proclaims *Much Ado About Nothing*'s hero Benedick as he prepares to get married – revoking his previous vehement oaths to the contrary – and so is Joss Whedon's film version of the play. Both the physical and verbal movement of the adaptation turn on the proverbial dime, as Whedon's repertory company of players from previous endeavours bring a joyful swiftness to this midsummer night's tale of the trials of true love. Amid the barbed banter of Shakespeare's play – where one set of lovers spend four-and-a-half acts insulting each other, and the other set get engaged after barely exchanging a word and then halt the marriage at the altar over charges of infidelity – Whedon crafts a fluent, contemporary story in which the pen is proved to be truly mightier than the sword, as dark plots are foiled not by duels but by poetic duets.

As clear and light as a California wine, Shakespeare's most sparkling dialogue meets its match in Whedon, whose immortal *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* catchphrase – "Love makes you do the wacky" – could serve as the film's strapline. *Much Ado* gives us grown women and men literally falling over themselves and each other as they fall in love, reinventing screwball

comedy even as it locates the genre's origins in the Bard. The relationship between Benedick and his band of commitment-phobic brothers-at-arms may even be the original bromance – but when Benedick plays the swashbuckling hero, it's Beatrice who buckles his swash.

Strong female characters are as much a Whedon hallmark as vibrant, idiosyncratic banter, and the film brings out the play's battle of the sexes as the macho incomers, returning victorious from war, arrive at Leonato's home and intrude on its peaceful domesticity. Beatrice's cousin Hero, daughter and angel of the house, is a difficult part to modernise given her extreme modesty, silence and forbearance; through the interactions between Hero and her maids Margaret and Ursula as they tease and tidy, however, Whedon creates a strong sense of a utopian space that opposes the shady battlefield from which the men have come. Paradigmatic is the slowburning joke of realising that Beatrice has put up Benedick and his comrade Claudio in a children's bedroom, complete with single beds and stacks of cuddly toys.

The open plan of Leonato's large and airy Spanish-style house allows for further visual twists and physical play to prevent the staginess that often attends Shakespeare films. The coherent pro-filmic space is another Whedonism: the eponymous spaceship in *Serenity* (2005) was built as a walk-through model rather than separate sets, and that spatial integration pays off here too. DP Jay Hunter's camera floats like

a butterfly through doorways and windows, stinging as it catches characters in moments of eavesdropping-inspired stunned epiphany.

Plots and jokes are mobile, bouncing across rooms and up stairs – none more so than when Beatrice, overhearing a staged conversation designed to make her think that Benedick is in love with her, pratfalls down the basement steps. Graceless in the way that only a supremely graceful performer can be, Amy Acker gives the film's show-stopping performance as Beatrice, unfolding her elegant lines with the same skill with which she folds herself under a kitchen counter to eavesdrop in awkward delight. Neither shrew nor spinster, it is she, and not Hero, who is the spirit of her uncle's house.

A veteran of Whedon's television ventures *Angel* and *Dollhouse*, in both of which she played a lovelorn scientist, Acker combines the affective and embodied intelligence of the classic comedienne, a skill and style underappreciated to the point of absence in contemporary cinema. Marilyn Monroe, comedienne par excellence, once wrote to Laurence Olivier noting that his final cut of *The Prince and the Showgirl* completely disdained her superior cinematic intelligence: "The pacing has been slowed and one comic point after another has been flattened out by substituting inferior takes." *Much Ado* could have been a similarly disastrous meeting of American pop culture and British high culture. But unlike Olivier, Whedon respects both modes equally, and grounds the film in trusting his



'Much Ado' could have been a disastrous meeting of American pop culture and British high culture, but Whedon respects both modes equally



Counter espionage: Beatrice eavesdrops on Hero (Jillian Morgese) and Margaret (Ashley Johnson)

performers – witness Tom Lenk's scene-stealing false moustache, which sets up a clever parody of detective dramas. That noir is romcom's flipside was also part of the premise of *Dollhouse*, which was set in LA and meshed boy-meets-girl with undercover operations. Here, the usually incomprehensible and unfunny scenes involving the malapropic Constable Dogberry and his incompetent deputy Verges are put to good use to pastiche the clichés of the police procedural (CCTV, guns, desk punching) as their storyline intersects with Don John's plot to convince Claudio that his betrothed, Hero, is unfaithful. Canted angles, long shadows, California languor and the casting of Conrad as a femme fatale all give John's scenes a deliberate *Double Indemnity*-cum-*Kalifornia* spin, so that Claudio's spurning of Hero and her subsequent deathlike faint have all the seriousness – and seediness – of a noir crime.

Where high-school Shakespeare tends to translate the plays' concerns about sexuality into a lighter register, suggesting that such ideas are outmoded among contemporary teens, Whedon's *Much Ado* shows up the continuing survival of the double standard, revealing Claudio to be a callow, thoughtless boy (a point underlined by the film's staging of his racist comment during the second wedding) and Leonato and Pedro hopelessly patriarchal. To do this, the film commits to, rather than fudges, the play's unlikely twists and turns: the delicate musical sequence of the funeral procession and the elegant simplicity of the veiled women representing multiple Heroes in the second wedding are cinematic solutions to problematic stage moments. Through their fluid incorporation into the cinematic narrative, they suggest that Shakespeare created these coincidences and collusions to highlight the gender bind, and to argue for a form of true marriage that would undo it.

Kenneth Branagh's 1993 film version posited an awkward ending, in which Don Pedro is left alone, preoccupied with hunting down his bad brother Don John, and exhorted to "get thee a wife" by Benedick. Queer theorists have suggested that Pedro, like Antonio in *Twelfth Night*, can be read as gay, and thus surplus to heteronormative closure. Whedon, a vocal supporter of the repeal of Proposition 8, which delegitimised same-sex marriage in California, offers a different reading. At the final party, the camera cranes up to offer an

overhead shot of a dancing ensemble, followed by a shot of Pedro letting his hair down among the crowd, dancing wackily with Margaret: not for love, but for fun. At the welcoming party at the beginning of the film, everyone went masked (including Pedro disguised as Claudio) and the entertainment was arch-jazz singers and trapeze artists. But for the closing party all masks have been shed, and all pretensions let go.

In this vision, marriage is the opposite not of singleness but of melancholy, an emotional state of alienation with which all the male characters identify at one point or another, while Beatrice says that she is single but "merry". Melancholy and military, the men are emotionally immature and unable to reintegrate into society; to love and marry is not to become part of a system, but rather to be part of the peaceful community the house symbolises, and to which the film is an extended love letter. That the house was planned, and the film produced, by Whedon's wife Kai Cole makes Benedick's giddy exhortation all the more tender. That bromantic fear of commitment is the *real* much ado about nothing, argues the film: giving up arms for love, the tie that binds, is the real song and dance. ☙

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by	©Messina, LLC	Jillian Morgese
Kai Cole	Hero	Spencer Treat Clark
Joss Whedon	Borachio	Riki Lindhome
Adapted for the screen by	Conrad	Ashley Johnson
Joss Whedon	Margaret	Emma Bates
Based on the play by William Shakespeare	Ursula	Tom Lenk
Director of Photography	Verges	In Black and White [185:1]
Jay Hunter		Distributor
Editors		Kaleidoscope Entertainment
Daniel S. Kaminsky		9,720 ft +0 frames
Joss Whedon		
Production Designers		
Cindy Chao		
Michele Yu		
Music		
Joss Whedon		
Sound Mixer		
Nathan Whitcomb		
Costume Designer		
Shawna Trpic		

A gated estate in southern California, the present. Leonato receives word that an armed company under Don Pedro has returned safely from battle and is heading for his house. The company includes Claudio, a young soldier on whom Leonato's daughter Hero has a crush, and Benedick, who was once involved with her cousin Beatrice. Pedro arrives with his criminal brother Don John, who is placed under house arrest along with his hangers-on Conrad and Borachio. After Pedro's machinations lead to Hero and Claudio's engagement at Leonato's welcome party, the four plot to gull the battling Benedick and Beatrice into realising their love for each other. Meanwhile John plots to undermine Claudio, his brother's favourite. The night before Hero and Claudio's wedding, Borachio flirts with Hero's maid Margaret, who is dressed in Hero's clothes, and John leads Pedro and Claudio to see them in an embrace. The wedding is halted when Hero is accused of infidelity; she collapses, seemingly dead. The officiating friar persuades Leonato of Hero's innocence, and the two devise a plan to use her apparent death to restore her reputation and test Claudio. Borachio, caught recounting his role in the deceit, is tried and convicted by Constable Dogberry and his deputy Verges. Benedick challenges Claudio to a duel to prove his love to Beatrice. Claudio atones by creating a funeral procession for Hero and agreeing to marry her identical cousin – really Hero herself – the following day. Benedick and Beatrice finally confess their love. John is apprehended, having fled. Leonato throws a party.

The Act of Killing

Denmark/United Kingdom/Norway/Germany/Finland/Sweden/The Netherlands/Poland 2012

Director: Joshua Oppenheimer

Certificate 15 122m 5s

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

It's not Joshua Oppenheimer's fault that his film has been so massively overpraised since its premiere (in a three-hour version) at the Copenhagen Documentary Festival in 2012. *The Act of Killing* documents the filmmaker's encounters (seemingly over an extended period) with former leaders of a Pancasila Youth paramilitary death squad in Northern Sumatra. The main protagonist is Anwar Congo, who enthusiastically demonstrates how he and his cohorts slaughtered hundreds of 'enemies' in 1965 and dreams up a few musical fantasy scenes designed to celebrate their famous victories. The sheer novelty of showing unrepentant mass-killers who are only too happy to re-enact their crimes for the camera impressed the likes of Errol Morris and Werner Herzog enough to make them come on board as executive producers, and the finished film has been widely taken as a Herzog-like vision of mankind's capacity to wallow in hells of its own creation.

Oppenheimer himself describes his filming method as "an investigative technique, refined to help us understand not only what we see but also how we see and how we imagine. (The resulting film may best be described as a *documentary of the imagination*)". Those italics are his, and they're designed to paper over the seams in the film's mix of interview, reportage, re-enactment and kitsch fantasy. Perhaps they're also designed to deflect attention away from the signal lack of historical analysis and Oppenheimer's evident reluctance to make explicit anything from the timeframe of the filming to the details of his dealings with the killers.

There's no doubt that *The Act of Killing* is a bizarre and disturbing watch, and it's easy to agree with the well-known Indonesian director who says (necessarily in private) that the film's overriding merit is that it shows how bloodstained scumbags are still in charge of much of the country today. In interviews, Oppenheimer has rationalised his decision not to chronicle what happened in 1965 but instead to explore the psychological gestalt of a country in which mass-murderers brag about their slaughtering – and still intimidate their neighbours – with complete impunity. His encounters with conscienceless killers and tactical complicity in helping them to re-enact and glorify their crimes clearly called for nerves of steel; his own probity is beyond question.

What can be questioned, though, is the thinking that governed the assemblage of the material. The near-total absence of context, either about the historical facts or about the production process itself, definitely doesn't help us understand what we're seeing or how we're seeing it. (There's more about the historical context in the synopsis accompanying this review than there is in the entire film.) On the contrary, the emotionally manipulative use of some of the material (particularly in the closing scenes, which suggest that Anwar suddenly becomes aware of the enormity of his crimes) raises all kinds of questions about veracity. Are the impressions we get from the film's sequencing of events any more trustworthy than our reaction to Flaherty's

See feature
on page 36



Ride with the devil: *The Act of Killing*

notorious stagings of 'reality' in *Nanook of the North* – or to the selection and editing of snippets in an episode of *The Apprentice*, for that matter? Without a grasp of the decisions taken during the editing, a sense of the film's timespan and of what's been left out, we'll never know. And that's without even asking what it means to cut from *ciné vérité*-style reportage to Anwar's own clunky attempts at Hollywood-style musical tableaux: a chorus-line emerging from the maw of a giant fish (actually a former restaurant), dancers swaying in front of a waterfall to the strains of 'Born Free'.

Oppenheimer includes footage of Anwar and his henchmen reminiscing about their movie-going in the 1960s – they idolised Brando, Elvis et al – to explain the roots of these rather tawdry fantasies and to suggest the mindset which fuelled their killing sprees. But his own shortcomings as a cinephile prevent him from making obvious connections between his material and the work of other filmmakers, in Indonesia and

elsewhere. He could have picked up lessons in conceptual sophistication from Apichatpong Weerasethakul, who explored the psychic scars from anti-communist massacres in Thailand in his film *Uncle Boonmee* and his installation *Primitive*, both of which also incorporate movie dream-worlds. Or he might have looked at the Anglo-Cambodian documentary *Enemies of the People* (2009), in which Rob Lemkin and Thet Sambath slowly coax Khmer Rouge functionaries into demonstrating their killing methods and Pol Pot's 'Brother Number Two' Nuon Chea into confessing his undiminished faith in a 'final solution'; that's a fine film which hides nothing of its makers' tactics or decisions. And Indonesia's braver directors, such as Riri Riza, Edwin and Joko Anwar, are producing remarkable insights into the lasting impact of their country's historical problems in fiction features. Shocking as it often is, this all-too-unrefined film is a mere Western footnote to their work. S

Credits and Synopsis

Co-directors

Christine Cynn
Anonymous

Produced by

Signe Bryge Sørensen

Producers

Joram ten Brink
Anonymous

Christine Cynn

Anne Kühncke

Joshua Oppenheimer

Michael Uwemedime

Cinematographers

Carlos Arango

de Montis

Lars Skree

Anonymous

Editors

Niels Pagh Andersen

Janus Billeklev

Jansen

Mariko Montpetit

Ariadna Fatjo

Vilas Mestre

Charlotte Munch

Bengtsen

Erik Andersson

Original Sound Design

Elin Øyen Vister

Costumes

Anonymous

©Final Cut for Real

ApS and Novaya
Zemlya Ltd

Production Companies

Final Cut for Real

presents a film by

Joshua Oppenheimer

Produced by Final

Cut for Real ApS

Co-produced with

Piraya Film and

Novaya Zemlya Ltd

In association with

Spring Films Ltd

Developed with

support of Danish

Film Institute, DR, EU

MEDIA Development

Produced with the

support of Danish

Film Institute, EU

MEDIA Broadcast,

Arts and Humanities

Research Council

UK, University

of Westminster,

Nordisk Film & TV

Fond, Norwegian

Film Institute,

DANIDA, Stavanger

Kommunes

Kulturfond

2010, The Freedom

of Expression
Foundation,
Stiftelsen Matriark

Produced in

collaboration with

ZDF in collaboration

with Arte, DR, K,

NRK, YLE, SVT,

VPRO, Kudos

Family Distribution,

Against Gravity

Executive Producers

Werner Herzog

Errol Morris

André Singer

Joram ten Brink

Torstein Grude

Bjarte Mørner Tveit

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Dogwoof

10,987 ft +8 frames

Medan, Northern Sumatra. In 2004, American videographer and human-rights activist Joshua Oppenheimer begins filming with Anwar Congo and his henchman Herman Koto, small-time criminals who had become leaders of a local Pancasila Youth paramilitary death squad in November 1965, executing countless suspected communists and their supporters, sometimes after summary 'trials'. (The massacres, carried out with the approval and/or help of the army, were reprisals against the PKI, the Communist Party of Indonesia, which had assassinated six hardline anti-communist generals in an attempted coup on 30 September, apparently with the tacit support of the ailing President Sukarno.) Oppenheimer invites Anwar and his cohorts to both discuss and re-enact the death-squad murders – and subsequently to create musical fantasy scenes to educate their descendants about their 'heroic' achievements. Anwar and his friends, who feel no remorse, participate enthusiastically and even go on national television to discuss the project; many friends and neighbours (some of them children of the murdered) are cajoled/bullied into joining the re-enactments. Sumatran politician Marzuki joins a gung-ho rally for the Pancasila Youth. By the time Oppenheimer's filming ends, several years later – and specifically after showing footage in which he re-enacts a summary garroting to his own grandchildren – Anwar seems to begin feeling remorse after all.

Before Midnight

USA/Greece 2013

Director: Richard Linklater

See feature
on page 30

Reviewed by Sukhdev Sandhu

"How long has it been since we walked around just bullshitting?" It's a question that Jesse (Ethan Hawke) asks Celine (Julie Delpy) as they amble

through the gorgeously sun-smeared landscape of a Greek island. What vast reverie and recollection lie in that question: memories of *Before Sunset* (2004), one of the most achingly romantic films ever made and perhaps – alongside Aleksandr Sokurov's *Mother and Son* (1997) – one of the most beautiful examples of perambulatory poetics to appear on a big screen; memories of how that film trembled with memories – not just Jesse's and Celine's but also, by extension, the audience's – of *Before Sunrise* (1995); memories of how passionately at its teasing, tantalising close we yearned to know if they would stay together, but also of our anxiety, should a sequel be made, that their relationship might have crinkled and faded.

That anxiety doesn't entirely abate as *Before Midnight* begins. The setting is Greece – a country whose idyllic appearance masks austerity and downturn. Jesse – his forehead corrugated, his hair dubiously coloured – resembles not-quite-ageless French rocker Johnny Hallyday. He's in a modern airport, a lustreless non-space very different from the auratic expanses of Vienna and Paris of the previous films. And he's with his American son Hank, now a teenager, seeing him off as he returns to his mother in Chicago: the cocoon that Jesse and Celine previously inhabited, a bubble of togetherness, is punctured by this familiarity. Then, as he steps outside to get into a car with Celine, comes a killer shot: two angel-headed daughters.

Compression was at the heart of Richard Linklater's previous films: the lovers were always racing against the clock – one of them had to leave to catch a train or a plane – and this imbued every second of their time together with a charged intensity; each glance or touch or syllable might have to last them a lifetime. Now they're no longer before; they're after – or within. They're middle-aged: they're in that future – a version of that future, at least – for which they had yearned.

Getting older, the rawness of youth planed and sheened, greedy ambitions and lust for life tempered and compromised: no fictional series of movies – not Truffaut's Antoine Doinel films (and among documentaries perhaps only Michael Apted's *Up* series) – has ever chronicled this inexorable journey with such tenderness. When Celine says that she's going to give up her job at a non-profit environmental firm to work for a boss she claims to despise, it feels like defeatist realpolitik, a betrayal of her previous ardour – and maybe of those of us who willed her on to fight the good fight against the masters of the universe.

It's rare to feel this kind of fierce attachment to characters. There are appearances here from the charming Walter Lassally (director of photography on *Zorba the Greek*) and the incandescent Xenia Kalogeropoulou, but it's hard not to wish them away the better to listen to Jesse with his windy descriptions of a novel he's writing, his speculative conceits, passivity, willingness to goof around if it will cheer people around him; or Celine with



Still walking: Ethan Hawke, Julie Delpy

her anxieties, exaggerations (at one point she creates a continuum between Jesse's rationality, Donald Rumsfeld and the Final Solution), cute childhood stories, ability to say surprising things ("The only upside of being 35 is that you don't get raped so much").

Hawke and Delpy, who co-wrote the screenplay with Linklater, make this oscillation between badinage and feistiness, cosiness and irritability, look effortless. Their spats, which get heavier as the film goes on, aren't the stuff of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* melodrama; rather, they emerge from petty gripes familiar to anyone who's been in a relationship. It's hard not to leave the film feeling pensive, a little rueful: not because we were foolish to invest so much in the romantic drama of the first two films or to believe that Jesse and Celine were soulmates, but because the vision of romance offered here – all compromises and toleration – is sensible rather than thrilling.

It's hard also not to wonder about the changing

nature of cinematic romance. *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset* were free of mobile phones, pre-social media. Everything Celine and Jesse said or did could be remembered – or misremembered. Now they're constantly taking pictures, logging life as much as living it. Can they or the younger characters in the film ever feel they're alone – severed from the world by the intensity of their love – when any private moment might be punctured by an incoming text? How would the series have evolved if Jesse had been able to use Facebook to trace and contact Celine?

Tired, scratchy, needling: *Before Midnight* is a more sober, less giddily aerating contribution to Linklater's trilogy. But it still documents the struggle to keep love alive with unusual charm and wit. At one point Celine gazes at the sun retreating behind the mountains: "It's still there, it's still there... it's gone." Has this series been taken as far as it can go? No, the magic is still there, the magic's not gone. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Richard Linklater
Christos V.
Konstantopoulos
Sara Woodhatch
Written by
Richard Linklater
Julie Delpy
Ethan Hawke
Based on characters created by Richard Linklater and Kim Krizan
Director of

Photography

Christos Voudouris
Edited by
Sandra Adair
Set Designer
Anna Georgiadou
Music Composer
Graham Reynolds
Sound Recordist
Colin Nicolson
Costume Designer
Vassilia Rozana
©Talagane LLC

Production Companies

Faliro House presents in association with Venture Forth and Castle Rock Entertainment a Detour Film production
Executive Producer
Jacob Pechenik
Cast
Ethan Hawke
Julie Delpy
Celine
Seamus Davey-Fitzpatrick
Hank
Jennifer Prior
Ella
Charlotte Prior
Nina
Xenia
Kalogeropoulou

Natalia

Walter Lassally
Patrick
Ariane Labed
Anna
Yannis
Papadopoulos
Achilleas
Athina Rachel Tsangari
Ariadni
Panos Koronis
Stefanos
Kalogeropoulou

Dolby Digital

In Colour
[185:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Sony Pictures Releasing

Greece, present day. Jesse, an American writer, is at Kalamata Airport to see off his teenage son, who is returning to his mother in Chicago after spending a wonderful summer with Jesse. Outside the airport, Jesse gets in a car with his partner Celine and their two young daughters Ella and Nina; they drive to the writers' retreat where they have been staying for many weeks. Along the way they discuss their married life, their anxieties about their jobs, their past. Later, as they enjoy a relaxed dinner with the owner of the retreat and

married Greek friends, their conversation turns to art, relationships and time itself. Later Celine and Jesse walk through beautiful countryside to the luxurious seaside hotel where their friends have booked them a room. Arriving at the hotel they are about to make love but instead find themselves bickering: Celine accuses Jesse of adultery, declares that she no longer loves him and storms out. Jesse follows, acting out a scenario in which he has just seen Celine for the first time and is very aroused by her. The pair keep talking as night falls.

Bula Quo!

British Virgin Islands/United Kingdom/Fiji 2013
Director: Stuart St Paul
Certificate PG 90m 17s

Reviewed by Matthew Gregory

Bula Quo!, in which, bizarrely, Status Quo's Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt are chased around Fiji by an organ-harvesting gang, plays like a less subversive version of the surreal Viz cartoon strips in which Sting flies into space or Cliff Richard time-travels back to Bible days. Director Stuart St Paul (who directed the Quo's 2005 appearance in *Coronation Street*) aims for a jaunty blend of comedy (people falling into swimming pools), adventure (guns, jet skis, a golf-cart chase and Jon Lovitz miscast as a heavy) and musical interludes (including nine new Quo songs), but ultimately the film's lightweight ambitions buckle beneath the insistent thriller plot. The sense of an interminable Comic Relief skit is partly mitigated by some savvy use of locations and the widescreen frame, though the photography, busy editing and assiduous product placement dispiritingly evoke a tourist-board commercial.

Rossi and Parfitt are no Crosby and Hope, but their charming underacting is the film's saving grace. Charismatic, self-deprecating and game, they jump from boats and bridges, dive among sharks and quip drily in even the most perilous situations. When a fireball in their dressing room almost kills them, Parfitt observes mildly, "Bit warm, even for Fiji". The international brigade of Quo fans may enjoy *Bula Quo!* (Fijian for "Hello, Quo!") but, given its Russian roulette, organ harvesters and hallucinogenic drinks, they may be wise not to take their grandchildren. Loyal support seems assured, though, for preproduction is already underway on *Namaste Quo!*, an India-set sequel. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Tim Major
Written by
Jean Heard
Stuart St Paul
Director of Photography
Chas Bain
Editor
Lewis Albow
Production Designer
Felix Coles
Sound Recordists
Marco Iavarone
Nikos Nikolaiatos
Costume Designer
Georgina Napier

©Status Quo Films (BVI) Limited
Production Companies
Osiris Trustees Limited in association with INDYUK Films,

Duroc Media and Fiji Films present a Stuart St Paul film
Executive Producers
Bernard Le Claire
Simon Porter
Stuart St Paul

Cast
Francis Rossi
Francis Rossi
Rick Parfitt
Rick Parfitt
Craig Fairbrass
Simon
Laura Aikman
Caroline
Jon Lovitz
Wilson
Matt Kennard
Dave
Jean Heard
Reiko Best
Andrew Bown
Andy

John (Rhino) Edwards
Rhino
Matthew Letley
Matt
Tim Major
George
Leo Richmond
Lyman

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Miracle Communications

8,125 ft +8 frames

Fiji, present day. On tour, British rock group Status Quo arrive with their manager Simon and intern Caroline. Lead performers Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt stumble upon a crime gang who make drunk tourists play Russian roulette before harvesting their organs. Caught filming a murder, Francis and Rick escape from the criminals by diving from a boat. They then narrowly escape a bomb in their dressing room. Framed for the killing, the duo go on the run. Gang leader Wilson kidnaps Caroline, aiming to make her play Russian roulette, but the Quo and Simon save the day.

The Call

Director: Brad Anderson

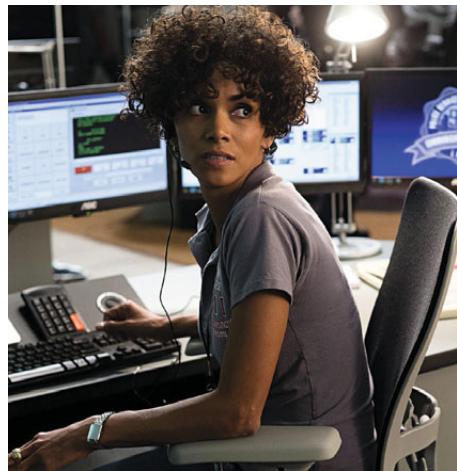
Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

The Call's premise is akin to that of 2002's *Phone Booth* and 2004's *Cellular* (script and story by Larry Cohen, respectively), in which drama is stoked through variations on the difficulties of maintaining a telephone connection between a desperate person on one end and a saviour or tormentor on the other. In *Phone Booth*, a man is trapped, telephonically tied to a sniper, while in *Cellular* it's up to teenager Chris Evans to keep kidnapped housewife Kim Basinger on the line while help can be found. *The Call*'s prologue has Los Angeles 911 operator Jordan Turner (Halle Berry) botching a call in which she hears the killer's voice, her panic leading to a young woman's death. Jordan, no longer able to stomach life-and-death responsibilities, quits her position. Six months later, she's training new operators when the killer's latest captive Casey (Abigail Breslin) calls in. Jordan steps in for a panicking operator and recognises a chance to redeem herself and catch the killer.

The main task of the film's first half is to figure out how many times Jordan can calm Casey and help her take steps to draw attention to or identify her abductor while confined to the trunk of an unmarked car, only to have every successfully realised effort frustrated by unforeseen circumstances. Here, Richard D'Ovidio's script shows resourcefulness, turning the trunk of the car into a pantry for plot twists. In the only sustained set piece, two white cans of paint are poured through a punched-out tail light, forming a jagged, near-invisible trail for helicopters and passing vehicles to hopefully pick up on. The film efficiently cuts from inside the trunk to the emergency call centre and manhunt vehicles on the freeway and in helicopters, turning triangulation into suspense.

Director Brad Anderson, most closely identified with several near-cult genre efforts (*The Machinist*, *Session 9*), has of late largely been a TV journeyman; with cinematographer Tom Yatsko (whom he worked with on *Fringe*) he exercises bluntly functional shot choices. The final moments of the killer's first victim are staged *Paranormal Activity*-style — a camera planted under a bed, in place as a screaming woman is torn away from it. Once Casey is in the trunk, the camera is shoved right up into her face, revelling in hysteria. Meanwhile Jordan labours under parodically simplistic reaction close-ups of her co-workers: first bluntly disappointed and then universally admiring.

Nastiness takes the place of modest cleverness when the film, having run out of tricks to keep Casey confined, becomes a hunt-the-psychological thriller. The kidnapper (Michael Eklund, another *Fringe* collaborator) is a twitchy aberrant whose slowly parcelled-out backstory involves a dead sister, predictably misdirected sexual urges and a lot of unpleasantness. The finale requires Berry to drop into a basement labyrinth without a working phone or alerting anyone, an idiotic choice that leads to more psychological silliness. Though the film makes an early stab at providing a detailed, realistic look at an unfamiliar working environment, the ending indulges in vigilante justice, making a mockery of any notion of law and order.



Down the wire: Halle Berry

The Call was endorsed by no less than William Friedkin, who enthused on Twitter in March that it was "brilliantly done. It will scare the hell out of you as it did me". While it'd be nice to be able to confirm that some old-fashioned craft was being practised on unexceptional B-movie material, *The Call* barely gets to the semi-tepid highs of *Cellular* before devolving into impactless sadism. The competent, no-CGI, modest-budget Hollywood thriller is such a rare beast that it's tempting to celebrate any sample, but this model won't serve. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Jeff Grapow
Michael J. Luisi
Robert L. Stein
Michael A. Helfant
Bradley Gallo
Screenplay
Richard D'Ovidio
Story
Richard D'Ovidio
Nicole D'Ovidio
Jon Bokencamp
Director of Photography
Thomas Yatsko
Film Editor
Avi Youshanian
Production Designer
Franco Giacomo Carbone
Music
John Debney
Sound Designer/Supervisor
Lon Bender
Costume Designer

Magali Guidasci

@[TBC]
Production Companies
TriStar Pictures and Stage 6 Films present in association with Troika Pictures, WWE Studios and Amasia Entertainment a Troika Pictures and WWE Studios production

Executive Producers
William C. Gallo
Philip M. Cohen
Dale Rosenblum
Guy J. Louthan

Casey Welson
Morris Chestnut
Officer Paul Phillips
Michael Eklund
Michael Foster
Michael Imperioli
Alan Denardo
David Otunga
Officer Jake Devans

Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors UK

Los Angeles, the present. Jordan Turner, a 911 operator, handles a call badly, resulting in the death of teenager Leah; during the call Jordan speaks to the killer.

Six months later, Jordan is working as a trainer for 911 operators when schoolgirl Casey is abducted from a shopping mall car park. Casey dials 911 from the trunk of her abductor's car and Jordan takes over the call. She realises that Casey's kidnapper is the same man who killed Leah. Despite Jordan's best efforts, the killer escapes a citywide manhunt, though the police are able to determine his identity. After ending her shift, Jordan goes to the killer's home and discovers his hidden basement, freeing Casey. They report the killer as missing, leaving him tied up in his own torture chamber.

Chasing Mavericks

USA 2012

Directors: Curtis Hanson, Michael Apted

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Only surfers and other initiates into the seemingly occult Pacific surfing culture could possibly be moved by this family B-movie, try as it might to Make Us Feel what it's like to hang ten, or whatever. A *Karate Kid* variant derived, amazingly, from the true story of California teenager Jay Moriarty – who became instantly famous in surfing magazines after handling a dangerous break then drowned a few years later while cliff diving – the film is fashioned entirely from clichés: Fatherless Kid Wants to Learn Dangerous Sport, Troubled Father-Figure Guru Decides Under Duress to Train Him, Bully Won't Leave Kid Alone, Beautiful Girl Slowly Sees Kid's Worth, Fortune-Cookie Training Lessons Match Life's Demands, Fear and Pain Are Overcome, Perseverance Triumphs. For non-surfers, the yards of wave-riding footage are less than thrilling – Kathryn Bigelow's *Point Break* (1991) made the case slightly better, and salted it with bank robberies and skydiving – as is the tiresomely bland and blond Jonny Weston in the lead.

Gerard Butler, as the Yoda figure, seems out of place, but the more pressing questions are how the overqualified Curtis Hanson (who left the project for health reasons) and Michael Apted (who replaced him) took on this knee-jerk nonsense, and whether, given his untimely death, Moriarty's story isn't actually a cautionary tale against extreme water sports. It's like remaking *Pollock* as a celebration of drunk driving. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Curtis Hanson
Mark Johnson
Brandon Hopper

Screenplay

Kario Salem

Story

Jim Meenaghan and Brandon Hopper

Director of Photography

Oliver Euclid

Editor

John Gilbert

Production Designer

Ida Random

Score

Chad Fischer

Production Sound Mixer

Nelson Stoll

Costume Designer

Sophie de Rakoff

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Korea and Spain)

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Jay Moriarty Elisabeth Shue

Kristy Moriarty
Abigail Spencer

Brenda Hesson

Leven Rambin

Kim Moriarity

Greg Long

Magnificent One

Peter Mel

Magnificent Two

Zach Wormhoudt

Magnificent Three

Devin Crittenden

Blond

Taylor Handley

Sonny

Cooper Timberline

young Jay

Maya Raines

Roquet

Dolby Atmos/ Dataset/SDDS

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor

Entertainment Film

Distributors Ltd

Cast

Gerard Butler

Frosty Hesson

Jonny Weston

The true story of Jay Moriarty, a fatherless California teenager seduced by surfing. With an irresponsible and drunk mother at home, Jay attaches himself to local surfing legend Frosty Hesson, whom he witnesses surfing Mavericks, a dangerous cove with waves that can reach 80 feet. As he also deals with a bully and tries to get a beautiful girl's attention, Jay persuades Frosty to train him. Eventually, Jay surfs Mavericks. He becomes famous when photographs of his surfing feat are published in magazines.

The East

USA 2013

Director: Zal Batmanglij

Certificate 15 115m 58s

Reviewed by Mar Diestro-Dópido

"If you spy on us, we'll spy back on you. If you poison our habitat we'll poison yours," intones a soothing female voice during the opening of *The East*, the second collaboration between director/writer Zal Batmanglij and co-writer/star Brit Marling. Like a mock corporate advertisement, the images that accompany the voice depict the devastating consequences of a crude-oil spillage on the shoreline, followed by a profile of the CEO of the organisation responsible for the disaster, whose house is shown also being flooded by oil. The perpetrators of this subversive act are members of an eco-terrorist group calling themselves 'The East'. Before long, Sarah (Marling), a young and overly zealous former intelligence agent, is contracted by a private company on behalf of the magnates being targeted by the group, her mission to infiltrate the organisation and reveal its members' identities. But of course things don't go according to plan, as Sarah, a practising Catholic, becomes increasingly drawn to the group's human-rights ideology and its eye-for-an-eye actions.

Produced by Ridley Scott and the late Tony Scott, *The East* is essentially a political thriller which, like Batmanglij and Marling's previous project, the low-budget sci-fi *Sound of My Voice* (2011), explores the moral implications of espionage and cult organisations, be they religious as in the earlier film or ecological as here. This time around, infiltration is carried out simultaneously by victims and perpetrators, implying the interchangeability of roles and thus adding a layer of complexity to the thorny issues surrounding ecological damage. *The East* is careful to question both sides, albeit a little schematically, through its protagonist's own conflicting views on the politics of the activists and their tactics, typified by her transformation from sleek



Oil change: Marling and Skarsgård

brunette executive into hippie-ish blonde. Less typically, and none too successfully, Batmanglij pushes the subject-matter towards the realm of fairytale – in the eerily mysterious, rundown house and adjacent woods of the group's hideout, for example, or in their initiation rituals – and even religious parable, with Sarah being quite literally baptised in the river by the group to signify her (apparent) rebirth as one of them.

Elsewhere, though, *The East* is predictable and obvious – antibiotics make patients sick instead of curing them, corporate waste is poisoning the water of a given community – and burdens itself with an absurd romance and one too many overly complicated backstories, which rather than fleshing out the characters seem only to proffer justifications for their actions. Finally, for all its anti-capitalist good intentions and commitment to the spirit of communal endeavour, *The East* really comes together when exposing the interests of individuals from either side and, by doing so, casting doubt on any such notion as the collective. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Ridley Scott
Michael Costigan
Jocelyn Hayes-Simpson
Brit Marling

Written by

Zal Batmanglij
Brit Marling

Production Companies

Fox Searchlight Pictures presents a Scott Free Production

Director of Photography

Roman Vasyanov

Film Editors

Andrew Weisblum

Bill Pankow

Production Designer

Alex DiGerlando

Music

Halli Cauthery

Production Sound Mixer

Scott D. Smith

Costume Designer

Jenny Gering

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Danielle Macdonald

Tess

Hillary Baack

Eve

Jason Ritter

Tim

Billy Magnussen

Porty McCabe

Dolby Digital/ Dataset/SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

20th Century Fox International (UK)

10,437 ft +0 frames

US, the present. Sarah is a young intelligence agent contracted by a firm that provides security for corporate clients. Her latest job is to infiltrate an eco-terrorist cell calling itself 'The East', which is causing havoc with radical 'eye for an eye' actions against corporations that damage the environment. Soon Sarah finds herself involved in the group's attacks ('jams') on a pharmaceutical company whose drugs have damaging side effects – the activists put the same drug in the champagne served at the company's party. Although at first the CEO declares that there have been no serious effects, she is later badly affected and the drug is taken off the market. In the meantime Sarah becomes attracted to Benji, the group's leader. The next 'jam' targets the father of group member Izzy; he is the owner of a corporation whose waste is poisoning the water of a creek. Together with the company's CEO, Izzy's father is taken to the creek and forced into the water naked. He apologises to Izzy; she is shot in the back by security and dies the next day. Sarah is told to discover the identities of all The East's members, but Benji informs her that she is the next victim, as they have known all along who she is. He blackmails her to get the full list of spies operating like her. The FBI raids The East's hideout just as Sarah tells Benji that she couldn't get the list. Benji and Sarah run away to the Mexican border but Sarah doesn't cross it. It transpires that she has kept the list. Over the credits we see her contacting the other spies and convincing them to turn against the corporations.

Epic

USA 2013
Director: Chris Wedge
Certificate U 102m 23s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Animated features, with their penchant for parallel worlds, mythic struggles and cute creatures, draw on a particularly small selection of core narratives. So this lushly animated story of tribes of tiny creatures warring over the fate of their woodland home explores themes already well mined by *FernGully* (1992), *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and Borrowers-on-acid tale *Arthur and the Invisibles* (2006). But production designer William Joyce's wonderfully detailed Leafland glades, filled with swooping bird-borne 3D battles, are breathtaking enough for one to overlook the plot's lack of originality. Joyce, creator of *Robots* (2005), *Rise of the Guardians* (2012) and the sweet-natured retro TV cartoon *Rolie Polie Olie*, has a gift for visualising engaging imaginary worlds and giving them their own distinct texture. Still, *Epic*'s all-round amiability and startling good looks would have benefited from sparkier dialogue and voicework – Christoph Waltz makes an oddly unremarkable villain here. ☺

Credits and Synopsis**Produced by**

Lori Forte
Jerry Davis
Screenplay
James V. Hart
William Joyce
Dan Shere
Tom J. Astle
Matt Ember
Story
William Joyce
James V. Hart
Chris Wedge
Leafman characters inspired by the book *The Leaf Men and the Brave Good Bugs* by William Joyce
Cinematographer
Renato Falcão
Edited by
Andy Keir
Production Designers
Greg Couch
William Joyce
Music
Danny Elfman
Supervising Sound Designer
Randy Thom
Supervising Animators
Galen Tan Chu
Melvin Tsing
Chern Tan

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Production Companies

A Twentieth Century Fox Animation presentation

A Blue Sky Studios production

Executive Producers

William Joyce

James V. Hart

Voice Cast

Colin Farrell

Ronin

Josh Hutcherson

Nod

Amanda Seyfried

Mary Katherine,

M.K.:

Christoph Waltz
Mandrake
Azia Ansari
Mub

Chris O'Dowd
Grub
Pitbull
Bufo

Jason Sudeikis
Bomba

Steven Tyler
Nim Galuu

Beyoncé Knowles
Queen Tara

Blake Anderson
Dagda

Allison Bills
Dandelion Jinn

Dolby Atmos/
Datasat/SDDS
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor

20th Century Fox

International (UK)

9,214 ft +8 frames

US, present day. Teenager M.K. goes to live with her estranged father Bomba, a scientist researching the woodland around his home. The Leafmen, tiny protectors of the forest, are attacked by the evil Boggans. M.K. finds the dying Queen Tara, who gives her a magic pod to guard. Shrunk to Leafman size, M.K. is guarded by warrior Ronin and young tearaway Nod. They discover that the pod must bloom at full moon to keep the woodland life-force alive. Mandrake, the Boggan king, steals the pod – without moonlight it will hatch an evil princeling for him. M.K. and Nod grow close. M.K. and her friends disguise themselves as Boggans, retrieve the pod and start the moon ceremony, but Mandrake's bat army blots out the moon's beam. Alerted by M.K., Bomba uses his bat recordings to draw the bat army away. The pod hatches, anoints a new queen, and the wood's life-force returns. M.K. is returned to normal size. Using Bomba's equipment she can talk to Nod, and visit him in the forest.

Fast & Furious 6

USA/Japan 2013
Director: Justin Lin
Certificate 12A 130m 4s

Reviewed by Patrick Fahy

"Go big or go home" was, we're told, director Justin Lin's mantra in preparing his fourth entry in the erratically titled series about loveable international carjackers. Bigger it is, with more action of more kinds than before as the exiled crew seek state pardons by chasing a weapon-building loon around London (accurately monumental and grotty) and Spain. The familiar traits are here: impressive precision-driving, bikinis, garage hideouts, sermons about family from Vin Diesel. New features include a tank causing motorway mayhem, flying headbutts, inter-vehicular leaps that border on the superheroic and, as in 2011's *Fast Five*, a shock coda (Jason Statham!) that's effectively a trailer for the next film. Like *Fast Five*, it's unwisely long but there's lots of pawky humour ("Why do I smell baby oil?" someone asks as Dwayne Johnson approaches), and Lin adroitly shuffles the numerous characters back by popular demand while weaving in plot threads from past and future instalments. With its route so confidently mapped out, the series shows no signs of slowing down. ☺

Credits and Synopsis**Produced by**

Neal H. Moritz
Vin Diesel
Clayton Townsend
Written by
Chris Morgan
Based on characters created by Gary Scott Thompson
Director of Photography
Stephen F. Windon
Edited by
Christian Wagner
Kelly Matsumoto
Production Designer
Jan Roelfs
Music
Lucas Vidal
Sound Design/Supervision
Peter Brown
Costume Designer
Sanja Milkovic Hays
Supervising Stunt Co-ordinator
Greg Powell
Fight
Olivier Schneider
Production Companies
Universal Pictures presents in association with Relativity Media

an Original Film/
One Race Films production
A Justin Lin film
Presented in association with Dentus Inc./
Fuji Television Network, Inc.
Executive Producers
Justin Lin
Amanda Lewis
Samantha Vincent
Chris Morgan
Film Extracts
The Fast and the Furious (2001)
2 Fast 2 Furious (2003)
Fast & Furious (2009)
Fast Five (2011)

Bridges
Tej Parker
Sung Kang
Han Lue
Gal Gadot
Gisele
Luke Evans
Owen Shaw
Gina Carano
Riley
John Ortiz
Braga
Shea Whigham
Stasiak
Elsa Pataki
Elena Neves
[uncredited]
Rita Ora
London race starter
Jason Statham
man ringing from Tokyo

Dolby Digital/Datasat/SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Part-subtitled

Distributor
Universal Pictures International UK & Eire

11,706 ft +0 frames

Present day. Dominic Toretto's retired carjacking crew are living in exile. Agent Hobbs offers them pardons if they can stop Owen Shaw, a criminal constructing a superweapon. Shaw's henchwoman is Dominic's lost love Letty, believed dead.

In London the crew almost catch Shaw's gang. During a chase, Letty shoots Dominic, wounding him. Infiltrating a US prison, crew member Brian learns that Shaw recruited Letty when she had lost her memory. In Spain, Shaw steals a tank containing the final component for his superweapon, but Dominic's crew (now aided by Letty) catch him. Shaw, assisted by Hobbs's treacherous second-in-command Riley, escapes. He drives aboard a cargo plane but the crew bring it down. The crew return to LA.

A Field in England

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Ben Wheatley
Certificate 15 90m 15s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

On the basis of three features in four years – *Down Terrace* (2009), *Kill List* (2011) and *Sightseers* (2012) – Ben Wheatley has established himself as one of the most audaciously original of British directors, with a penchant for left-field genre-splicing that's earned him a loyal fan-base. Even the most enthusiastic of his fans, though, may find themselves taken aback by his latest film, which is receiving a simultaneous release in cinemas, on DVD, on Freeview TV and Video on Demand – an unprecedented move that could either be seen as overweening confidence on the part of the distributors, or as a prudent bid to cover all the bases.

A Field in England starts with a fragmented vision of chaos. We hear smoke, shouts, shots, explosions, while the camera performs a frantic kick-bollock-and-scramble representing, we soon discover, the subjective viewpoint of a man called Whitehead (Reece Shearsmith) escaping from a battle in the English Civil War. Along with two other reluctant combatants, Jacob (Peter Ferdinando) and Friend (Richard Glover), he's led by a saturnine character called Cutler (Ryan Pope) to a huge field surrounded by a ring of mushrooms and presided over by the swaggering O'Neil (Michael Smiley), a self-declared alchemist who sets his three recruits, or captives, to unearthing the great treasure he claims is buried there.

This summary makes the film appear a good deal more coherent than it is. Wheatley and his regular writing partner Amy Jump throw in much that's oblique, much that's obscure and a lot that's downright weird. To enter the field, the four men, straining tug-of-war-style along a rope, are lugged in by some superhuman force that's possibly (a quick cut never quite reveals) linked to O'Neil. In order to turn him into a human metal detector or divining rod, O'Neil takes Whitehead into his tent, inside which we hear Whitehead screaming horribly. (Shearsmith, with his *League of Gentlemen* background, gives very good scream.) A pouchful of rings and some runic stones figure at certain points, though their exact significance is left unclear – as is Whitehead's reputed skill at lacemaking.

We get a smidgen of backstory. Whitehead is apprenticed – or so he says – to an alchemist in Norfolk, from whom O'Neil stole valuable manuscripts, and is charged with retrieving them; he more than once insists that he's not a soldier. Which side of the conflict the men are on isn't obvious: there's something of the cavalier about O'Neil's costume and manner, while Friend, with his leather helmet, looks the most like a Cromwellian footsoldier. But the war isn't an issue here, and is scarcely mentioned. The dialogue occasionally aims for period fustian – "Your privy parts are doomed, homunculus," roars an officer at the fleeing Whitehead, before being conveniently run through with a spear – but most of the time sticks to vernacular functional.

One possible reading, supported by certain lines of dialogue – "There are only shadows here," "You are nothing more than an envelope" – could be that some or all of the characters are



Keep off the grass: A Field in England

already dead, killed on the battlefield. Another, that Whitehead hallucinates the whole thing after stuffing his face with magic mushrooms and seeing a huge roiling black planet about to engulf the Earth. But for all its ominous portents, there are hints that the film isn't taking itself 100 per cent seriously; as ever with Wheatley, black humour lurks in the corners. Jacob, taking an alfresco shit, gets his genitals stung by nettles, and we're granted a huge close-up of the afflicted parts when Whitehead applies a soothing herbal poultice. Having been shot, the dying Friend tearfully begs his companions to take a message to his wife; it begins, "Tell her I hate her."

Laurie Rose, Wheatley's regular DP, brings to the film the same charged feel for landscape he so

potently demonstrated in *Sightseers*. Once again he's shooting in widescreen, though this time in monochrome to match the doomy mood – a mood abetted by Jim Williams's spare, percussive score. There are echoes here and there: the opening battle, thriftily conveyed through smoke and sound effects, recalls Peter Watkins's similarly minimal devices in *Culloden* (1964), and Michael Smiley's O'Neil, in his baleful arrogance no less than in his costume, evokes memories of Vincent Price's title role in *Witchfinder General* (1968). But even more than in Wheatley's previous work, the feeling here is of a filmmaker exhilaratingly striking out on his own idiosyncratic path – and perhaps not caring too much whether he's bringing all his public along with him. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Claire Jones
Andy Starke
Written by
Amy Jump
Director of Photography
Laurie Rose
Edited by
Amy Jump

Production Designer
Ben Wheatley
Music Composed by
Andy Kelly
Sound Design
Jim Williams
Costume Designer
Martin Pavey

©Roof Films England and Channel Four Corporation
Production Companies
Film4 presents a Rook Films production
Executive Producer
Emma Fryer

Cast
Julian Barratt
Trower
Peter Ferdinando
Jacob
Richard Glover
friend
Ryan Pope
Cutler

Reece Shearsmith
Whitehead
Michael Smiley
O'Neil, alchemist
In Black and White
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Picturehouse Entertainment
8,122 ft +8 frames

The Hangover Part III

USA 2013
Director: Todd Phillips
Certificate 15 100m Os

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Billed as "the third part of the Hangover trilogy" and portentously labelled "the end", this knockabout epitomises the bigger-means-worse aesthetic of too many sequels. Todd Phillips's original *The Hangover* (2009) was a nightmare comedy on the theme of male friendship, in which a Vegas bachelor party spun spectacularly out of control for Phil, Stu, Alan and Doug. This, however, feels like a hyper-inflated action film, opening with an elaborate jailbreak to free series regular Chow to torment the four friends again, peaking with chase and heist scenes that could have come from any midlist thriller.

Zach Galifianakis's Alan and Ken Jeong's Chow were successful as supporting turns in the original, but have been boosted in the sequels – which means that they still get to be strident and obnoxious but at greater length and less amusingly. Straight men Bradley Cooper and Ed Helms – not to mention poor stooge Justin Bartha – have consequently less to do, which means there's no real suspense in any race against time to save their friend. Random gags range from the decapitation of a giraffe in a trailer by a low bridge and nervous dentist Stu (Helms) waking up to find he's been given breast implants. It's all fairly desperate. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Todd Phillips
Dan Goldberg
Written by
Todd Phillips
Craig Mazin
Based on characters created by Jon Lucas, Scott Moore
Director of Photography
Lawrence Sher
Edited by
Debra Neil-Fisher
Jeff Groth
Production Designed by
Maher Ahmad

Legendary Pictures
a Green Hat Films production
A Todd Phillips movie
Executive Producers
Thomas Tull
Scott Budnick
Chris Bender
J.C. Spink

Dolby Digital / Datasat/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors (UK)
9,000 ft +0 frames

Cast
Bradley Cooper
Phil Wenneck
Ed Helms
Stu Price
Zach Galifianakis
Alan Garner
Ken Jeong
Leslie Chow
Heather Graham
Jade
Jeffrey Tambor
Sid Garner
Justin Bartha
Doug Billings
John Goodman
Marshall
Melissa McCarthy
Cassie
Mike Epps
black Doug
Sasha Barrese
Tracy Garner
Jamie Chung
Lauren

US, present day. Phil, Stu and Doug are taking their unstable friend Alan to a psychiatric facility when they're ambushed by gangster Marshall, who holds them responsible for his feud with manic Chinese criminal Leslie Chow. Marshall kidnaps Doug and threatens to execute him unless the others find and secure Chow and half a fortune in gold that Chow has stolen from him. Arriving in Mexico, they find Chow – who tricks them into stealing the other half of the fortune. In Las Vegas, they capture Chow, who kills Marshall; Alan falls in love with a kindred soul, but Chow sends him a drugged wedding cake which leads to more disasters.

England, during the Civil War. A man, Whitehead, escapes from battle; an officer orders him back but is killed by a spear. Whitehead is joined by two other men fleeing the battle, Jacob and Friend. A fourth man, Cutler, appears, saying that he knows of a nearby inn, but instead leads them to a huge field encircled by mushrooms. In the field is an alchemist, O'Neil, whom Whitehead identifies as the man he's pursuing for having stolen manuscripts from Whitehead's master, an alchemist in Norfolk. O'Neil tells them that a great treasure is buried in the field. Whitehead is taken into O'Neil's tent; we hear him screaming. He emerges roped, seemingly in a hypnotic trance, and leads O'Neil to a spot in the field. O'Neil orders Jacob and Friend to dig, supervised

by Cutler. The two diggers quarrel and start fighting; while trying to subdue them Cutler fatally shoots Friend. O'Neil makes Cutler take Friend's place in the excavation. Whitehead drags Friend's body to the edge of the field, eats mushrooms and hallucinates. A freak gale blows away the tent. Cutler revolts against O'Neil, who shoots and wounds him. Whitehead, Jacob and Cutler join forces against O'Neil. Friend resurrects and attacks O'Neil with a spear and is shot dead again. O'Neil is wounded in the leg but kills Jacob and Cutler before Whitehead shoots him dead. Whitehead buries the bodies in the hole, collects his master's scattered papers and picks up all the firearms. He returns to the battlefield, where he lays the guns on the ground.

I Am Breathing

United Kingdom/Denmark/Finland 2012
Directors: Emma Davie, Morag McKinnon



Remarkable determination: Neil Platt

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Strange how the apparent intimacy of the video-diary form sometimes proves unexpectedly distancing. This striking documentary about a 33-year-old Scots architect struck down by the ravages of Motor Neurone Disease is a case in point. Neil Platt, an old student-days acquaintance of the filmmakers, invited the camera in to share his final months, showing remarkable determination to turn the course of his demise into a campaigning exercise – in conjunction with his revealingly honest and witty blog, *Plattitude* – hence raising awareness of the incurable condition that had also taken his father's life years previously.

The access-all-areas result captures the ordinary and the extraordinary in Neil's unfolding circumstances: he's cared for at home by his indefatigable spouse Louise while the couple's small son Oscar toddles around; the intrusion of a hospital-grade hoist, ventilator and recliner marks a stark juxtaposition with the routines of domesticity. Sheer coincidence throws up telling moments, like the TV talent-show hopeful in the background belting out 'The Impossible Dream', yet even as we're struck by the purposeful level-headedness and astonishing lack of self-pity Neil displays as his time peters out, we could conceivably feel insulated from the images by their sheer raw particularity. Thank the heavens it's happening to him, there but for the grace of God...

That's not meant in any way to disparage the impact of sequences such as the harrowing footage of Neil struggling for every last breath – moments surely indicative of a deep bond of trust between subject and filmmaker. Instead, it's proffered as a way of commanding co-directors Emma Davie and Morag McKinnon for their key insight that this fly-on-the-wall footage wasn't sufficient in itself to convey the totality of their obvious ambitions for the film. Yes, it's a portrait of heart-breaking courage, but when it stops looking at Neil's heroic struggle and begins to recreate his emotional and imaginative journey from the inside, that's when it becomes so much more – a haunting and inclusive encounter with the all-encompassing verities of time, experience and mortality. By layering in old home-movie footage of Neil's and Louise's

honeymoon, for instance, the filmmakers convey for us the flood of memories occasioned by the shockingly aggressive progress of his illness, while POV images of the effect of the seasons on the couple's suburban garden also place Neil's awful fate within the natural world's broader cycle of decay and renewal. The masterstroke, though, is the incorporation of travelling footage shot on country roads, which magically unites the particular and the universal, since it subjectively signifies Neil's own memories of riding the motorbike he loved (resonating also with the terrifying possibility that his MND may have been a reaction to a bee sting he received while out on a ride) while also metaphorically registering the notion of a journey with existential and maybe even spiritual associations.

Editor Peter Winther and senior editing consultant Janus Billeskov Jansen have between them done a marvellous job of making sure that all these elements get just the right amount of screen time, integrating them with a fluidity which gives this genuinely powerful film a masterly assurance. It's perhaps a hopeful presumption that the 'I' in the title might refer to the viewer as well as Neil the subject, or indeed that we might take to heart Neil's onscreen blog entry suggesting that his personal realisation of "the when of things" should be an encouragement for us not to let our own time "slip by unnoticed". Yet that's precisely how the film plays out, its astute overall conception of the two-way traffic between the intimate and the cosmic giving *I Am Breathing* a sustaining hold on our thoughts and consciousness long after the tears we shed for Neil have melted away. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Sonja Henrici

Filmed by

Emma Davie

Editor

Peter Winther

Composers

Kieran Hebden

Sound

Jim Sutherland

Sound

Morag McKinnon

©SDI Productions

Ltd/Danish

Documentary

Production ApS

Production

Companies

SDI Productions/

Scottish

Documentary

Institute

In co-production with

Danish Documentary Production

Supported by Creative Scotland, Danish Film Institute

In association with Channel 4, Wellcome Trust,

MND Association, DR

- Danish Broadcast Corporation, YLE Broadcast Corporation, UK Film Council Lottery

Executive Producer

Noé Mendelle

In Colour

[1.78:1]

Distributor

Scottish Documentary Institute

Scotland, Channel 4, Wellcome Trust, MND Association, DR

- Danish Broadcast Corporation, YLE Broadcast Corporation, UK Film Council Lottery

Scandinavian Broadcast Corporation, YLE - Finnish Broadcast Corporation

Made with the support of UK Film Council

In co-operation with DR International Sales

Developed and supported by National Lottery

through Creative

A documentary portrait of Scottish architect Neil Platt, diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease in 2008 at the age of 33. Knowing that his condition will soon rob him of speech and movement, he begins a blog, collaborates on this film and puts together a memory box for his infant son Oscar. He recalls good times with friends and family, who rally around as he's cared for at home by spouse Louise. Meanwhile his increasingly high-profile online presence provides an outlet for his feelings and a vehicle for raising consciousness about Motor Neurone Disease, still untreatable despite medical advances in other areas. Eventually Neil's condition worsens; he completes his final blog entry and spends his last days in a hospice with Louise. He passes away in February 2009.

I Am Nasrine

United Kingdom/USA 2012
Director: Tina Gharavi
Certificate 15 93m 21s



On the road: Mischa Sadeghi

Reviewed by Mar Diestro-Dópido

Documentary director Tina Gharavi's first fiction feature *I Am Nasrine* is a coming-of-age tale about two adolescent Iranian siblings, Nasrine and her older brother Ali, who end up in Newcastle in search of freedom, their smuggled entrance into the UK paid for by parents desperate for them to escape a suffocating regime. Once there, Ali takes on two cash-in-hand jobs and Nasrine starts college as they wait to sort out their asylum.

Gharavi is an Iranian expatriate herself, and one of her most refreshing touches is her refusal to exoticise her protagonists, in part thanks to a soundtrack mainly comprised of unequivocally British bands such as Mogwai, Editors and Burial. What's more, the intermittent focus on background locals – adolescents hanging about outside a tower block looking for trouble, a bunch of kids playing around, a line of old ladies sitting in the sun against a wall – means that, regardless of their familiarity, they somehow become exoticised themselves.

This interchangeability between outsider and insider is given a further spin when Nasrine befriends college mate Nichole, who – a sort of outsider herself – lives with her family in a traveller-community caravan. Their friendship not only leads Nasrine to rediscover her own sexuality (she starts dating Nicole's older brother Leigh) and push a few boundaries but also allows Gharavi to emphasise how being an outsider, like being beautiful, is really in the eye, or heart, of the beholder.

The film's muted palette conveys an almost perennially overcast Newcastle and the concrete greyness of the council tower blocks in which Nasrine and Ali end up living. The area's recognisable harshness and rigid lines suggest imprisonment but also a rundown paradise that somehow mirrors the emotional development of the siblings as they warm to the opportunities opening up before them. Nasrine's horse-cart drive with Leigh through dumping sites, as the sunset caresses her skin and flares the lens of the camera, is both poignant and alluringly romantic.

At times *I Am Nasrine*'s genuine warmth and gentleness work against it: when tragedy strikes either in Tehran or Newcastle, for instance, its effect is somehow attenuated by the desire to leave it behind and move forward. Still, these tragic moments are key, demonstrating that it is clearly individual intolerance, regardless of



nationality, that brings these two seemingly far-removed worlds closer together than Nasrine and Ali could have imagined. Towards the end, when Nasrine tells Leigh, "It's a nice world where you come from, it's beautiful," his astonished – and fitting – response is, "I thought it was all one world to me." ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Tina Gharavi
James Richard Baillie

Writer

Tina Gharavi

Director of Photography

David Raedeker

Supervising Editor

Lesley Walker

Production Designer

Chryssanthi Kofidou

Sound Recordist

Tommy Hair

Production Companies

Bridge + Tunnel Productions/Bridge + Tunnel Voices in association with Northstar Ventures

present a film by

Tina Gharavi
Made with the support of Northstar Ventures

Co-financed by Northstar Ventures and Northern Film and Media on behalf of the North East Creative Content Fund LP, Magic of Persia, Women In Film Foundation Film Finishing Fund, Bridge + Tunnel Voices

Cast

Mischa Sadeghi

Nasrine

Shiraz Haq

Ali

Steven Hooper

Leigh

Christian Coulson

Tommy

Nichole Hall

Nichole

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Subtitles
Distributor

Bridge + Tunnel

Productions

8,401 ft +8 frames

Tehran, 2011. Teenager Nasrine is questioned by the police after riding on a bike with a male friend who is neither her husband nor her fiancé. Before being freed the next morning, she's raped by one of the policemen. When she returns home, her father tells her that he's decided to send her and her older brother Ali to the UK. The following day, the siblings set off in a lorry with other migrants being smuggled into the UK. When they arrive in Newcastle and seek asylum, they are told that it will take months to sort out their situation; in the meantime they can't work legally, but can attend college. Ali gets cash-in-hand jobs at a car wash and a kebab shop. Nasrine goes to college and meets Nichole, who comes from a Traveller community and arrives for classes in a horse-drawn cart. Soon Nasrine starts hanging out with Nichole, to the exasperation of her brother. She spends much of her time taking care of the horses owned by the traveller community and starts dating Nichole's brother Leigh, though she rejects his sexual advances. Ali accepts that he is gay; he agrees to a date with a young man but turns him down at the last minute. When Ali runs after his would-be lover, he's attacked and killed by a gang hanging about near their council block. After hearing the news, Nasrine returns to Leigh's caravan and they make love. Later, she phones her parents and tells them that she has decided to stay in Newcastle.

I Want Your Love

USA 2012

Director: Travis Mathews

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

In Australia, this debut feature by Travis Mathews – extended from his own 2010 short – was given a certificate that effectively barred it from public screening on the basis that it presented sex scenes “without a narrative context”. Which raises the question: does sex in real life have a narrative context? And if not, is any deliberately low-key, realist film that uses real sex also pornography? Certainly, *I Want Your Love* is low on non-sexual events; was produced by a porn studio, Naked Sword; and shows real erections, penetrations and ejaculations. How it differs from porn is probably a matter of taste, certainly one of definitions and marketing. (After all, if porn films don't have much plot nor do mumblecore films...) One could posit that the sex here is intended to arouse but – as many asked around the release of Patrice Chéreau's *Intimacy* (2001) and Michael Winterbottom's *9 Songs* (2004) – why deliberately excise eroticism from a film concerned with sexual pleasure?

I Want Your Love shares more territory with John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus* (2006), which also depicted sex as a shaping factor in the emotional journeys of a clutch of self-aware urban hipsters. But Mathews (who went on to co-direct the similarly sex-centric *Interior: Leather Bar* with James Franco) is less concerned with either spectacle or narrative trajectory than Mitchell: this film is an intimate, raggedy slice-of-life in which conundrums and crises are left unresolved. The primary source of non-sexual tension is whether Jesse (Jesse Metzger), a somewhat whiny thirtyish performance artist whose art seems to involve running his hands over tables, will sacrifice his close-knit San Francisco social scene to move back to his parental home in Ohio. A charged farewell meeting with his nice ex Ben turns out not to be charged at all, and he decides not to attend his own going-away party; what might be a last-minute stirring of love for older neighbour Keith (Keith McDonald) fizzles to nothing. Meanwhile, his roommate Wayne (Wayne Bumb) faces a minor threat to his own relationship that – yep – doesn't come to much. Though the actors, Metzger in particular, are likeable, they seem understandably



Dodgy connection: Jesse Metzger

unengaged by this less than explosive material – and much more at ease with the sex scenes, where at least something happens. (When we hear about a Prince impersonation so “deeply magical” that it constitutes “more channel than transformation”, it points up the shallowness of most of the characterisation we get to see.) Interestingly, given the Australian ruling, the film's most intriguing emotional moment really does concern sex as narrative: Jesse, having come close to intercourse with Keith, backs out, and the audience experiences Keith's disappointment and effort to adjust his response.

I Want Your Love is warm and sincere, and has clear significance in its blurring of the boundary between indie relationship movie and erotica; it just achieves the latter rather more interestingly than it does the former. Unvarnished realism is all very well but Mathews's film seems a little too hellbent on downplaying life's dramas; for every climax, there's a little too much anticlimax. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Jack Shamama
Travis Mathews

Written by

Travis Mathews

Director of Photography

Keith Wilson

Edited by

Travis Mathews

Production Designer

Jacquelyn Scott

Lead Sound Recordist

Jake Sussman

©Naked Sword Entertainment
Production Companies

NakedSword presents

in association with

Gduroy, Tim Valenti,

Jason Buchtel a Jack

Shamama production

A Travis Mathews film

Executive Produced by

Tim Valenti

Cast

Jesse Metzger

Jesse

Ben Jasper

Ben

Keith McDonald

Keith

Ferrin Solano

Ferrin

Wayne Bumb

Wayne

Bronitez Purnell

Bronitez

Jorge Rodolfo

Jorge

Peter De Groot

Peter

San Francisco, the present. Jesse, a performance artist in his early thirties, is preparing to move

back to his parents' home in Ohio, primarily to save money. His friends are throwing a going-away party for him, though he isn't particularly interested; his chief concern is how it will be to say goodbye to his former boyfriend Ben, whom he has not seen since their break-up. Jesse's roommate Wayne has invited his boyfriend Ferrin to move in, but both are getting cold feet. Ben meets Brandez in a clothing store and they talk, establishing that they are both attending Jesse's party. Ben and Jesse meet up and Jesse finds the experience unaffectionate. During his party, Jesse hides out in the apartment of his neighbour Keith, who is away. Ferrin and Wayne experiment with a threesome. Keith returns unexpectedly and he and Jesse get stoned and talk. Ben and Brandez have sex; Ferrin and Wayne discuss their relationship, reconcile their differences and have sex. Jesse and Keith kiss and start to make love, but Jesse changes his mind. The next day, Ben drives Jesse to the airport.

Like Someone in Love

France/Japan 2012
Director: Abbas Kiarostami
Certificate 12A 109m 34s

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

Abbas Kiarostami throws a curveball with *Like Someone in Love*, a Japanese-French co-production filmed on locations in and around Tokyo with a

high-calibre Japanese cast acting in Japanese. A Japanese film, then, perhaps in the vein of Kiarostami's beloved Ozu? Yes and no. The film is certainly deeply Japanese: it's rooted in the phenomenon, much discussed in Japan, of 'paid dating' (college students and high-school girls who casually prostitute themselves for pocket money, often in the care of a 'protector') and its grasp of Japanese manners, mores and language is faultless. And you could, at a stretch, think of it as an update of a film like Ozu's *Woman of Tokyo* (*Tokyo no Onna*, 1933), in which a young woman prostitutes herself – she moonlights from a respectable office job – to pay for her younger brother's education. But the discreet formalism that underpins the film, such as the way it both opens and closes with fraught offscreen voices, is typical of Kiarostami and only very obliquely reminiscent of Ozu. The film is ultimately a morphed sequel to *Through the Olive Trees* (*Zir-e Derkhatab-e Zeytun*, 1994), the Kiarostami classic in which a young actress fends off persistent advances from an impoverished suitor who greatly irritates her.

The young woman here is Akiko (played by relative newcomer Takanashi Rin, also seen in Ishii Sogo's *Isn't Anyone Alive?*), a college student who is neither diligent nor particularly smart. She arrived in Tokyo two years ago from the sticks and now regrets having advertised her availability on a phone-kiosk flyer garnished with a 'kooky' schoolgirl photo of herself. She and her savvier friend Nagisa now work for the high-class pimp Hiroshi (Denden, a stand-up memorable as the psychotic killer in *Cold Fish*), who one evening rubishes all her excuses to cry off and insists that she sees an 'important' client. This turns out to be the octogenarian writer/translator Watanabe (stage actor Okuno Tadashi), who is more interested in feeding and chatting with her than in anything sexual; Kiarostami draws a veil over what happens (or doesn't) between them overnight.

Next day, though, Watanabe is pulled into Akiko's attempts to break free from the neurotically possessive Noriaki (Kase Ryo, Japan's equivalent to Ben Whishaw, seen in films by Koreeda, Kitano and Clint Eastwood), a car mechanic who considers himself her boyfriend and is set on marrying her. Noriaki takes Watanabe for Akiko's grandfather, but loses his rag completely when he accidentally learns the truth. Kiarostami gives us three main characters who don't know or understand each other very well (how well do they even know themselves?) and explores their learning curves through a series of charged and anxious situations.

As in his last 'international' film *Certified Copy*, Kiarostami leaves much ambiguous and uncertain while providing plenty of tantalising backstory to digest. There's a sense that he's enjoying the chance to transpose some core concerns from his Iranian films into other contexts with other moralities, traditions and

See feature on page 40



Strapped for cash: Takanashi Rin

social norms. Co-producer Horikoshi Kenzo reports that one of the starting points here was a flyer on which a girl advertised her sexual services (Kiarostami asked an elderly actress to go and find one on the street during an audition), and so we can guess at some of his thinking. With no Christian or Muslim tradition, Japan's attitude to sex is relatively matter-of-fact and guilt-free; but how does a city girl feel when she betrays her rural family's hopes by prostituting herself, and how do her relatives react to the rumour that she's doing so? Equally, what goes on in an elderly man's head when he pays handsomely to rent a young woman for the night – and then finds himself playing grandfather to both her and the out-of-control young man who's all but stalking her?

Which of these protagonists behaves like someone in love? Kiarostami leaves us to judge, while relishing the gap between their behaviour and the sentiments expressed in the Jimmy Van Heusen standard which gives the film its title. (The version played over the end credits is Ella Fitzgerald's 1957 cover, not the Dinah Shore original.) The film definitely is about love – sexual, platonic, familial, dangerous, even deflected – and it's of a piece with Kiarostami's Iranian films in finding both pathos and wry amusement in its characters' impulsive thoughts and actions. Like this review, the film is full of questions. The one thing that's for sure is that this masterly filmmaker is sufficiently open-minded to work wherever he chooses without compromising the integrity of his questions. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Marin Karmitz
Horikoshi Kenzo

Written by

Abbas Kiarostami
Director of Photography

Yanagijima Katsumi
Editor

Bahman Kiarostami

Art Director

Isomi Toshihiro

Sound

Kikuchi Nobuyuki
Mohamadreza Delpak

Production

©MK2, Eurospace

Companies

MK2 and Eurospace present a film by Abbas Kiarostami With the participation of CNC - Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée and L'Agence pour les

Affaires culturelles,
Gouvernement du Japon

Cast

Okuno Tadashi
Watanabe Takashi
Takanashi Rin

Subtitles

Distributor
New Wave Films

9,861ft +0 frames

Tokyo, now. Student Akiko is pressured by her 'protector' Hiroshi into accepting a 'paid date' with a client, despite her worries that she should be revising, or seeing her visiting grandmother. (She is also fending off her possessive boyfriend Higuchi Noriaki, who keeps calling to check on her whereabouts but doesn't know that she works as an 'escort'.) Her 'date' for the night turns out to be elderly writer/translator Watanabe Takashi, who is kindly and solicitous. Next morning he drives her to college and sees her arguing with Noriaki, who was waiting to intercept her. Noriaki takes Watanabe for Akiko's grandfather and strikes up a conversation with him; they discuss his wish to marry Akiko, until she emerges from her

botched exam. Noriaki detects an incipient fault in Watanabe's car and suggests going to the car-repair workshop he runs to fix it. While there, Watanabe is recognised by another customer, an ex-cop who was once his pupil. His car made safe, Watanabe drops off Akiko at a bookshop. But she later calls him, in evident distress, and he drives back to the city to fetch her. Back home, he goes to buy first-aid medicines to treat a bleeding wound on Akiko's cheek; she fends off questions from his inquisitive neighbour. No sooner is Watanabe back than a furious Noriaki arrives, demanding to be let in; he has learnt from his customer that the old man is not Akiko's relative. Denied access, Noriaki smashes one of Watanabe's windows.

The Moth Diaries

Canada/Ireland/United Kingdom 2011

Director: Mary Harron

Certificate 15 82m 21s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Writer-director Mary Harron made a fair fist of adapting Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, retaining the novel's ambiguity about the degree to which Patrick Bateman is fantasising psychotic excesses to embroider an account of his ghastly regular lifestyle. She doesn't manage nearly as well with Rachel Klein's similarly challenging *The Moth Diaries*, which is written from the point of view of a protagonist who admits she is drawing on her own neuroses (and the ghost stories she is reading for a course) to depict her school rival-cum-doppelganger as an actual vampire.

Whereas Harron retained the 1980s setting (and music) of *American Psycho*, her script here snips the book-end comments from the now-grown-up narrator and updates Klein's core story from the late 1960s to the present day. However, even the remote private-school setting doesn't explain why these girls aren't Beliebers hung up on social media or why they don't make more than moderate use of their mobile phones. Whereas Klein's only musical specific is Cat Stevens, Harron's film has a *Twilight*-type soundtrack of contemporary indie/emo songs (mostly well-used and evocative, though the standout musical moment is Lily Cole singing a gruesome nursery rhyme).

Harron superficially updates the novel by making the central group of girls multiracial, though oddly she deletes the most significant ethnic aspect of the book. Klein's narrator, Ernessa, and the ill-fated Dora are Jewish, while the other pupils are predominantly blonde WASPs (in the book, the murdered Miss Bobbie is an anti-Semitic – here, she's just nasty). Klein's bespectacled narrator is less cute than Sarah Bolger's healthy looking Rebecca, who only has memories of her father's suicide by razor blade to set her down a road to potential psychosis. All the pupils at Brangwyn are teen-movie pretty, which makes it harder to understand Rebecca's apparent dependence on her blonde friend Lucy (Sarah Gadon, more literally a vampire's victim than she



Lust for a vampire: Lily Cole

was in Brandon Cronenberg's *Antiviral* last year) and transforms the rest of the gang from vividly sketched characters into simple hangers-on. With slightly stylised colours to signify dreamed or imagined sequences in which Ernessa levitates or showers in blood, this still needs to be more literal than the novel to pass as a vampire movie. The diary viewpoint is broken so Ernessa can have a black-and-white period flashback (reminiscent of similar scenes in George Romero's *Martin*) to establish that she has been here before.

The redeeming feature of the film is Cole as a vampire. With her huge eyes and tiny mouth (showing sharp teeth), she is the sort of actress who is going to be cast as an alien or supernatural creature more often than as a regular human being (she was an alien mermaid in *Doctor Who*). Speaking huskily in a manner that echoes Barbara Steele, whom she rather resembles when her hair is dyed black, Cole's languid, melancholy, not completely malevolent Ernessa is a striking take on the Carmilla archetype.

For this story to work, however, the narrator has to wonder whether her friend Lucy (the name is a double allusion, to Bram Stoker and Wordsworth) isn't right to see her – rather than Ernessa – as the monster. But when Harron tries to make that connection in the audience's mind by having Cole tell Bolger that their characters look alike, it isn't enough to justify the suggestion. S

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Karine Martin

David Collins

Screenplay

Mary Harron

Based on the novel
by Rachel Klein

Director of Photography

Declan Quinn

Editor

Andrew Marcus

Production Designer

Sylvain Gringras

Music

Lesley Barber

Sound Recordist

Simon Poudrette

Costume Designer

Nicoletta Massone

©MD (Quebec)

Productions Inc./

Samson Films Limited

Production Companies

Alliance Films and

Edward R. Pressman

present a Mediamax,

Samson Films

co-production

In association with

Strada Films and

Lionsgate UK

With the participation

of Mediabiz

International, Telefilm

Canada, Astral's

Harold Greenberg

Fund, Windmill Lane

Pictures and Bord

Scannán na hÉireann/

Irish Film Board, the

Province of Quebec

Production Tax Credit

SODEC, the Canadian

Film of Video

Production Tax Credit

A film by Mary Harron

Executive Producers

Norton Herrick

Zygi Kamasa

Jon Katz

Jean-François Doray

Louis-Simon Ménard

Mark Sloane

Edward R. Pressman

Sandra Cunningham

Cast

Lily Cole

Ernessa

Sarah Gadon

Lucy

Sarah Bolger

Rebecca

Judy Parfitt

Mrs Rood

Melissa Farman

Dora

Laurence Hamelin

Sofia

Gia Sandhu

Kiki

Valerie Tian

Charley

Scott Speedman

Mr Davies

Anne Day Jones

Rebecca's mother

Kathleen Fee

Miss Bobbie

Dolby Digital/SDDS
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor

Lionsgate UK

7,411 ft +8 frames

Brangwyn, an American girls' boarding school, the present day. Rebecca, the daughter of a poet who has recently committed suicide, looks forward to spending the school year with her close friend Lucy since they have been allotted adjoining rooms. Mrs Rood, the headmistress, introduces new girl Ernessa Bloch. Rebecca, who is taking a class on supernatural literature with teacher Mr Davies, becomes jealous of Ernessa's influence over Lucy and picks up on clues – like Ernessa's appearance in a photograph of Brangwyn taken in 1907 when it was a hotel – that the girl is a vampire. Rebecca loses

other friends and suspects Ernessa has orchestrated their departures: Charley gets high on drugs Ernessa supplies and smashes a window (which gets her expelled); Dora falls to her death from a ledge outside the window of Ernessa's room. Rebecca spies on Ernessa and Lucy in bed and Lucy falls sick with mysterious anaemia. Miss Bobbie, a teacher who picks on Ernessa, is killed. While in hospital, Lucy recovers but rejects Rebecca and returns to Ernessa, whereupon she dies. Rebecca finds Ernessa sleeping in a trunk of earth in the basement and sets fire to her, though Ernessa seems to survive.

Out in the Dark

Israel/USA 2012

Director: Michael Mayer

Certificate 15 95m 35s

Reviewed by Ben Walters

Love across the divide is, of course, one of the oldest and sturdiest romance plots in the book – across cultures, across genres, across borders of whatever kind. Among its many uses, it's been a key plot in gay cinema for obvious reasons: along with race, religion and certain elements of class, sexuality remains a potential sticking point in cultures that have shucked off some of the more stringent social demarcations keeping couples at arm's length. But as LGBT rights have continued to progress, the mere fact of gayness no longer bespeaks outsiderdom with quite the force it once did. In more and more situations – though certainly far from all – it's the love that does dare speak its name, and what's it to you? To retain its potency in a context of alternate sexuality, the story requires ever more extreme extraneous circumstances.

It's hard to imagine lovers who are much more star-cross'd than a gay Israeli-Palestinian couple. Michael Mayer's debut feature *Out in the Dark* is about Nimir (Nicholas Jacob), a graduate student of sociology who makes secret trips from Ramallah to Tel Aviv, where he meets Roy (Michael Aloni), a young Israeli lawyer. Their attachment grows, especially once Nimir is granted a student travel visa and allowed regular visits, but is sorely tested by family expectations, ethnic prejudices, the machinations of the state and psychological upsets. As a personal romance, *Out in the Dark* is not seismic: much of the dialogue and narrative set-up – from Nimir's militant brother and effeminate best friend to Roy's liberal-ish parents and drinking habit – feels schematic, and although the



Odd couple: Michael Aloni and Nicholas Jacob

lead performances are good, the chemistry between first-time actor Jacob and former teen idol Aloni is not exactly electrifying.

Where the film does impress is as a tragedy of circumstance. Its opening shots lend an ambiguously clandestine air to Nimr's stealing across a boundary, encouraging us to take a conventional view of the purposes of a young Palestinian man sneaking into Tel Aviv under cover of darkness before subverting our expectations. Ideas of trappedness, physical, psychological and bureaucratic, pervade the story, taking on a quality of tragic despair once Nimr is cast out by both his family and the Israeli authorities. Compromise and corruption of various kinds become the only alternatives to a kind of stateless non-existence that maps on to the self-doubt of queerness with potency, and here Jacob's performance does an excellent job of communicating basic decency squeezed in a vice. This is a world where disaster can come in an unguarded text message and salvation destroys.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by	support of Israel Film Fund and Channel 10 a Periscope production
Written by	Yael Shafir
Michael Mayer	
Directed by	Nimr Mashrawi
Director of Photography	Ran Aviad
Editor	Maria Gonzales
Production Designer	Sharon Eagle
Music	Mark Holden
Production Sound Mixer	Michael Lopez
Costume Designer	Asher Dahan
Hamada Atallah	
©Cyns Rios Ltd	
Production Companies	M7200 Productions presents with the

The present. Palestinian student Nimr secretly travels between Ramallah and Tel Aviv to visit a gay bar where his friend Mustafa works and where he meets Israeli lawyer Roy. Nimr's brother Nabil, an anti-Israeli militant, hides a cache of weapons at the family home. Nimr obtains a student travel permit and sees Roy weekly. Israeli security forces send Mustafa back to Ramallah; seen as a gay turncoat, he is killed by a gang including Nabil, witnessed by Nimr.

Nimr's relationship with Roy deepens but attempts to secure him legal Israeli residency founder, his travel permit is revoked and his family reject him when they discover his homosexuality. He flees illicitly to Tel Aviv. Israeli security forces raid Nimr's home, capture Nabil and start hunting Nimr. Seeing TV coverage, Roy thinks that Nimr might be a militant and rejects him. Nimr despairs of surviving and is chased on foot by police.

After security forces visit his flat, Roy regrets his decision and finds Nimr to apologise. He says that a gangster contact can take Nimr by sea to France, where they will meet. Realising that he has been followed, Roy acts as a decoy, allowing Nimr to reach the port. Roy is captured by security forces, who tell him that his life is ruined and deduce the escape plan. We see Nimr on the boat at sea.

Pain & Gain

USA 2013
Director: Michael Bay
Certificate 15 129m 25s



Bad boys: Dwayne Johnson, Mark Wahlberg and Anthony Mackie

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Michael Bay is buff. There is a picture of him, taken in the Playboy Mansion, his home away from home, in 2007. He has his chest exposed. A big gold medallion is nestled beneath the overhang of his toned pecs. He stands to the right of the June 2004 centrefold; on her other side is Mike Tyson. The corner of Bay's mouth is jacked up in a crooked smile. This is the life!

Prime architect of the staggeringly profitable *Transformers* franchise, Bay has done very well for himself, with a net worth estimated at \$400 million. This hasn't necessarily exchanged into cultural capital. Bay's name is used, mostly accurately, as a byword for everything that is wrong with Hollywood: the pandering to the basest impulses of adolescent males, the heedless profligacy, the blunt-force-trauma style, the nihilistic violence and almost complete absence of any human values. But it must be admitted that Bay has some singular kind of insight into the zeitgeist and *Pain & Gain*, his tenth feature as director, has become the flashpoint for a critical reckoning. Michael Bay: vulgar auteur, or common philistine?

What Bay has is everything that Daniel Lugo, the protagonist of *Pain & Gain* and one of its

multiple narrators, wants. The film's events are based on a series of articles written by Pete Collins for the *Miami New Times*, about the exploits of a gang who ran a kidnapping and extortion racket out of that city's Sun Gym. Lugo managed both racket and gym until finally brought down in 1995 – the same year that Bay's Miami-set feature debut *Bad Boys* was released. Lugo is played by Mark Wahlberg, whose voice runs into a breathless, thin whine when he's exasperated or confused, which he often is here. Wahlberg is resuscitating the dull-witted Dirk Diggler of *Boogie Nights* (1997), the simpleton who believes that his physical gifts have equipped him for an extraordinary destiny.

Bay shoots from awed low angles which make his buffed cast – Anthony Mackie and Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson round out the gang – appear as swaggering gods, while the script emphasises their very human foolishness. Bay's images are the Sun Gym gang's ideal of themselves, forever flexing in a mirror in their mind's eye; the awful truth is in the facts of the story. The film's overarching theme, the chasm between self-image and actuality, is summed up in an exchange between Lugo and Doyle (Johnson) when the latter stumbles into a wedding party, coked up, his

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by	Donald De Line
Michael Bay	Michael Bay
Ian Bryce	Ian Bryce
Screenplay	Christopher Markus
Stephen McFeely	Stephen McFeely
Based on magazine articles by	Pete Collins
Director of Photography	Ben Seresin
Edited by	Thomas A. Muldown
Production Designer	Jeffrey Beecroft
Music	Steve Jablonsky
Sound Mixer	David Husby
Costume Designer	Deborah L. Scott
©Paramount Pictures Corporation	Paramount Pictures
Production Companies	Corporation

Miami, the mid-1990s. Frustrated by his dead-end life, Daniel Lugo, a personal trainer and manager, recruits two regulars at his Sun Gym, Adrian Doorbal and Paul Doyle, to kidnap one of his wealthy clients, Victor Kershaw, in order to extort money from him. After seizing Kershaw and forcing him to sign over all his assets, the Sun Gym gang attempt to kill their captive in what's meant to look like a

Cast	Frank Griga
Mark Wahlberg	Rebel Wilson
Daniel Lugo	Robin Peck
Dwayne Johnson	Bar Paly
Paul Doyle	Sorina Luminita
Anthony Mackie	Emily Rutherford
Adrian Doorbal	Carolyn 'Cissy' Dubois
Tony Shalhoub	Yolanthe Cabau
Victor Kershaw	Analee Calyera
Rob Corddry	Tony Plana
John Mese	Captain Lopez
Ken Jeong	Ed Harris
Jonny Wu	Ed Dubois
Michael Rispoli	

Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Paramount Pictures UK

11,647 ft +8 frames

drunk-driving accident. However, Kershaw survives and hires private investigator Ed Dubois to track down his assailants. The Sun Gym gang, having blown Kershaw's money, select a new target, phone-sex magnate Frank Griga. When their plan to swindle Griga goes awry, Lugo accidentally kills him. Dubois connects the gang to the murders, and one by one they are caught and sentenced.

Paradise: Faith

Austria/Germany/France 2012
Director: Ulrich Seidl

face painted green by an exploding dye pack in a heisted cash bag from an armoured car, his toe shot off by pursuing police. "You look like shit," says Lugo. "I feel like I look great," says Doyle.

There are manic passages in *Pain & Gain* when filmmaker and material seem to fit hand in glove. Who better to deal with crass, acquisitive aspiration than one who has made his living by selling the same values? Bay came to features from commercials and music videos. His *Bad Boys* was followed by ever larger, ever more bombastic spectacles – *The Rock*, *Armageddon*, *Pearl Harbor* – monumentally shallow works whose nothing-succeeds-like-excess style matched the false-bottomed super-prosperity of the pre-9/11 bubble-economy years, the period in which *Pain & Gain* lays its scene.

And *Pain & Gain* does feel very 1990s – not merely in the way that it conjures up the era's high-end lifestyle porn, but in how it plays as a callback to the cycle of attitudinal, 'dark' caper comedies that proliferated around the time Bay was first making the scene, when Quentin Tarantino's breakthrough success began a 'black comedy' boom stretching between, say, Danny Boyle's *Shallow Grave* (1994) and Peter Berg's *Very Bad Things* (1998). More than anything, though, *Pain & Gain* has the mark of the Brothers Coen on it, concerning as it does a Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight who've gotten in way over their heads. Marge Gunderson's "There's more to life than a little money, you know" in *Fargo* is even echoed in a moral summing-up by Ed Harris's PI, an ode to 'simple things' — easy for a leathern WASP to appreciate, given the privileged piece of real estate he occupies.

The script, by Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely, intuits a great deal about race, class and longing for mobility in America. Lugo's dormant ambition is first activated by Jonny Wu, a motivational speaker who asks his acolytes to identify themselves as either doers or don'ters. The character, played by Ken Jeong, is based on real personality Tommy Vu. Here, Vu's cutthroat go-getter rhetoric is lampooned – though in Bay's *The Rock* a similar worldview was iterated for all time in fratboy-quotable fashion: "Your best? Losers always whine about their best. Winners go home and fuck the prom queen." Is this rank hypocrisy? Is it a mistake to credit Bay with irony, with a capacity to embrace *intentionally* the same ambiguity that Steven Soderbergh recently bemoaned the loss of in American movies?

It sure feels like it every time Bay betrays his bad-boy self-satisfaction in rendering nasty true-crime material as farce, in the deflationary soundtrack FX that might as well be the classic "Waaa waaa waaaaaaah" accompanying egg-on-their-faces look-at-these-dummies punchlines. But while *Pain & Gain* often frustrates, Bay's overwhelming cinematic sense is undeniable – he's swallowed the dictionary of film grammar and there are moments when the movie's sunstroke delirium and iconographic flair recall the Mikhail Kalatozov of *I Am Cuba* (1964). Deeply conflicted and fitfully brilliant, *Pain & Gain* may not be the movie of the moment that cinephiles wanted – certainly not from this smirking, perma-tanned messenger – but it's the one we've got. ☀



God love her: Maria Hofstätter

**See feature
on page 44**

Reviewed by Paul Tickell

A middle-aged woman disrobes and begins to flagellate herself. This opening scene might be from the Middle Ages but is actually taking place in the present, in a living room in suburban Vienna. Of course, Anna Maria the flagellant (Maria Hofstätter) would probably prefer to be back in some monastic cell during the Holy Roman Empire, when mortification of the flesh was the order of the day. When she and a group of like-minded zealots occasionally gather in her home

to pray for Austria to become Catholic again, it's this lost world of asceticism and devotion that they have in mind. In fact there are plenty of Catholics in contemporary Austria, it's just that for this group too many of them are lost souls taken by the tide of liberalism and modernity when they should be swimming sturdily in the sea of faith. We learn nothing of the members of the group personally but they obviously share their host's fundamentalism, with or without its baroque sadomasochistic knobs on.

To want to laugh in a derisory manner is the default position of the liberal educated

Credits and Synopsis

Producer Ulrich Seidl Screenplay Ulrich Seidl Veronica Franz Cinematographers Wolfgang Thaler Ed Lachman Editor Christof Schertenleib Production Designers Andreas Donhauser Renate Martin Sound Ekkehart Baumung	Costume Designer Tanja Hausrer ©Ulrich Seidl Film Produktion, Tatfilm, Parisienne de Production, ARTE France Cinéma	Production Companies A Ulrich Seidl Film Produktion in co-production with Tatfilm, Parisienne de Production A film by Ulrich Seidl	Sponsored by Österreichisches Filminstitut, Filmfonds Wien, Eurimages, Abteilung Kunst und Kultur des Landes Niederösterreich, Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée, MEDIA Programme of the European Union Co-produced by Tatfilm and Parisienne de Production, ORF (Film/	Fernsehabkommen , ARTE France Cinéma, WDR ARTE, ARD Degeto	Cast Maria Hofstätter Anna Maria Nabil Saleh Nabil René Rupnik Mr Rupnik Natalija Baranova drunk Russian Dieter Masur Trude Masur	Austrian/German theatrical title Paradies Glaube Onscreen English subtitle Paradise Faith
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Vienna, the present. Middle-aged Anna Maria works as a radiographer in a hospital. The rest of her life is taken up with prayer and self-flagellation. Occasionally a group of like-minded people, devoted to the cause of converting the whole of Austria to Catholicism, gather in her suburban house. Anna Maria moves around her home on her knees, praying, for hours on end. She also goes door to door to spread the word of God, and her faith is tested by those she wishes to bring into the religious fold: some respond

with amusement, others with violence. The biggest test is her Muslim husband Nabil, who is paralysed from the waist down. Adhering to puritanical and abstemious views on sexuality, reinforced by her disgust at chancing on a night-time orgy in a local park, Anna Maria refuses Nabil any kind of physical comfort. He responds by invoking his conjugal rights and then by attempting rape. She breaks down in front of the crucifix on her bedroom wall, lashing out at it with a whip and later kissing it in remorse.

 mind when confronted with the kind of religious extremism and emotional primitivism encapsulated in a character like Anna Maria. But Ulrich Seidl is not a director to enter into a cosy pact with the audience about when and how to laugh. Severely non-judgemental on the surface, like in some Luis Buñuel film where the flagellants would be allowed to hang themselves, as it were, Seidl lets his obsessive protagonist do the talking for him as she goes about her business of door-to-door preaching, with a two-foot-high statue of the Virgin Mary as a visual aid.

It may be hard for Anna Maria to try to convert a violent drunken Russian immigrant or, at the other end of the spectrum, an easygoing middle-aged Austrian couple 'living in sin' but her doorstepping is a piece of cake compared to the challenge at home presented by Nabil (Nabil Saleh), her wheelchair-using Muslim husband, who has reappeared after an unexplained absence. In fact, much in the film is unexplained, which is to its credit: it's not at all hung up on the explanatory mechanics of realism, which Seidl's methods reveal to be pretty redundant. He barely dwells on narrative revelations such as the one, during one of many fraught exchanges, in which we learn that the accident that led to Nabil's paralysis was also the trigger for Anna's religious mania – or faith, depending on your angle. As always Seidl keeps his options open: it's for the viewer to judge – or not.

In other directors, this might feel like sitting on the fence. But Seidl's aesthetic is too meticulous and confident to feel like a hostage to relativism. The framing is symmetrical to the point of dogmatism and the camera rarely moves. Big close-ups are rare. The Seidl ideal is the medium-to-wide shot, with the action filmed in continuous takes so that there is little if any cutting within a scene. The drama usually unfolds in a room or space framed to resemble a stage – a little theatre of the absurd – as when, from the disadvantage of his wheelchair, Nabil uses his stick to dislodge Anna's religious icons from the walls on which she's hung them high. Equally absurdist is the moment when Anna herself takes down the huge crucifix from her bedroom wall and masturbates with it, giving herself to Christ in every sense of the word. She has no intention of being so giving towards her husband, whose desire for human warmth and physical contact she rejects as well as punitively depriving him of his wheelchair. Her own frustrations are of a whole other confused carnal and spiritual order and inevitably she cracks, using her whip on the crucifix on the wall – which she then kisses and makes up to.

Another director might have played this for laughs or the grotesque. But by remaining as unmoved as his camera, Seidl allows a warped but very human drama to develop before us, the overlapping naturalistic dialogue and the improvisation of the excellent cast adding to the claustrophobic intensity. Initially Seidl's scripts, written with Veronika Franz (who has also worked with him on the other two films in this trilogy, *Paradise: Love* and *Paradise: Hope*), only exist as outlines: it's the actors and core crew who write and flesh them out, the editing a further draft. Out of this process comes a raw but highly crafted realism. ☀

Paradise: Love

Austria/Germany/France 2012
Director: Ulrich Seidl



Sisterhood of the travelling pants: *Paradise: Love*

See feature
on page 44

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

In 1999's *Platform*, controversial French novelist Michel Houellebecq described the sex-tourism industry as an essential component of the international division of labour. "You have several million Westerners who have everything they could want but no longer manage to get sexual satisfaction... On the other hand, you have several billion people who have nothing left to sell except their bodies and their unspoiled sexuality."

Set in a Kenyan resort where middle-aged Austrian 'sugar mamas' catch tans and pay for sex with young black 'boys', Ulrich Seidl's latest piece

of provocation will inevitably invite comparison with Laurent Cantet's 2006 film *Heading South*, in which Charlotte Rampling played one of a trio of winsome women visiting Haiti for the purposes of sex with local men. It has more in common, though, with Houellebecq's novel, which is similarly concerned with the globalisation of prostitution and with tourism as an updated legacy of colonialism, and is just as archly stylised and sledgehammer subtle in its use of irony. There are overlaps, too, with the grotesquerie of Elfriede Jelinek's novels: like the antiheroines of *The Piano Teacher* and *Lust*, Seidl's protagonist, divorcee Teresa, is comfortably off but crucially lacks the erotic capital so highly prized by Western society.

Credits and Synopsis

Producer Ulrich Seidl	Costume Designer Tanja Hausner	Sponsored by Österreichisches Film Institut, Filmfonds Wien, Eurimages, Abteilung Kunst und Kultur des Landes Niederösterreich, Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée, MEDIA Programme of the European Union Co-produced by Tatfilm and Parisienne de Production, ORF (Film/	Fernsehabkommen , ARTE France Cinéma, WDR ARTE, ARD Degeto	Gabriel Nguma Mwaruwa Gabriel Josphat Hamisi Josphat Carlos Mukutani Salama Melanie Lenz Teresa's daughter Maria Hofstätter Teresa's sister	Distributor Soda Pictures Austrian/German theatrical title Paradies Liebe Onscreen English subtitle Paradise Love
Screenplay Ulrich Seidl Veronika Franz	Cinematographers Wolfgang Thaler Ed Lachman	Production Companies An Ulrich Seidl Film Produktion in co-production with Tatfilm, Parisienne de Production A film by Ulrich Seidl	Cast Margarethe Tiesel Teresa Peter Kazungu Munga Inge Maux Teresa's friend Dunja Sowinetz Helen Brugat tourists		
Editor Christof Schertenleib	Production Designers Andreas Donhauser Renate Martin				
Sound Ekkehart Baumung					

Mombasa, Kenya, the present. Middle-aged divorcee Teresa has left her teenage daughter at home in Austria to visit a luxury holiday resort where European women are able to pick up young African men selling sex for a living. Teresa is at first anxious – unable to distinguish between the black 'beach boys' and overwhelmed by their attentions – but her more experienced compatriot Inge assures her she'll soon be enjoying herself. Teresa backs out of her first clumsy attempt at an assignation with the pushy Gabriel; she tells her fellow 'sugar mamas' that she wants someone to make her feel special, to see past her age and weight and into her heart. At

first, shy, sweet Munga seems to do just this. Soon, however, he starts demanding money, and when Teresa eventually refuses one of these demands the relationship sours, leaving Teresa feeling humiliated. On Teresa's birthday, three of her friends buy her a boy for the night. The women take turns groping and stroking him but eventually dismiss him, disappointed by his failure to get an erection. A now cynical Teresa brings barman Josphat to her room and commands him to perform oral sex on her. When he refuses she throws him out, collapsing in tears on her bed. The next morning she walks the shore alone, as beach boys cartwheel past her.

Renoir

France 2012
Director: Gilles Bourdos

Having failed to imitate desirability, Teresa finds herself forced to buy it, or at least the illusion of it. She tells the other plump blondes lined up by the pool at her luxury Mombasa resort that she wants someone to see past "the wrinkles and fat arse" – but, as if to underline the difficulties this might entail, Seidl's camera returns over and over to her naked or semi-clad flesh, pink, mottled, overripe.

Her Rubenesque figure is not without a certain vulnerability, however. Across documentaries such as *The Bosom Friend* (1997) and *Models* (1999) and fictions *Dog Days* (2001) and *Import/Export* (2007), Seidl has consistently depicted his female characters in a kinder manner than he does the men. Watching *Paradise: Love*, it's often easier to feel for Teresa (magnificently incarnated by Margarethe Tiesel) than her quarry, who know the rules of the game far better than she does. As the 'beach boys' line up like mannequins beyond the rope dividing them from the tourists on sunbeds, it's not entirely clear who falls on which side of the shop window. In this stifling climate of simulation and dissimulation, Teresa's longing for recognition appears as an oasis of authentic emotion: a genuine event in an artificial world.

Part of the problem facing Teresa seems to be that the transactional nature of these affairs is addressed obliquely. Much of the framing of Seidl's film conversely suggests a desire to cut to the chase. His trademark tableaux are on striking display here, the geometric compositions, straight lines and head-on camera positioning placing his characters quite literally in boxes. Yet the sultry African settings are cast in a palette of sugary pastels that bathes even the more ascetic set-ups in a sickly soft light; and as Teresa crosses over the boundary into the beach boys' world, the constructed set-ups give way to a more fluid, free-roaming camera, allowing for an affective alignment with the heroine.

In this regard, an opening sequence set at a funfair including extreme close-ups of mentally impaired adults is a misdirect, setting us up for a level of bad-taste shock value that doesn't quite emerge in what follows. For the most part, *Paradise: Love* is far less corrosive than the director's earlier works. The first in a trilogy (along with *Faith* and *Hope*) centred on lonely women looking for happiness, the film's provocation lies largely with its sympathetic depiction of female sex tourists. Throughout, a shadow film hovers in the viewer's mind, one that features ageing males and lithe young women: it's hard to imagine that it could be so gently humorous.

It's not the content of *Paradise: Love*, then, that leaves a bad taste in the mouth. It's the context. Like so much of Seidl's work, the film longs to be talked about in terms of its constituent parts: the scripting, casting, direction, editing. The director's use of non-professional actors in some rather humiliating scenes in particular begs questions about exploitation. No doubt the individuals concerned were paid well enough; but then again, so were their characters. And if the Western filmmaker/African cast relationship re-enacts the john/prostitute dynamic, where does that leave us as onlookers? It's not an easy question to answer. The production conditions of *Paradise: Love* haunt us long after the credits have rolled. S

**See interview
on page 10**

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

Gilles Bourdos approaches his biopic of the French impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir as if the subject had been overworked and

needed a new angle. He also seems to suppose that his audience is already familiar with the artist's personal life, since he focuses only on a slim tranche of the Renoir story: the year of the appearance of his last muse, Andrée 'Dedée' Heuschling, and the final successful spate of painting she inspired. But without outside knowledge – of Renoir's marriage, of the live-in mistress in the shape of his wife's cousin and the *beau ideal* of his harem-like domestic state – the average audience member may have a hard time accessing the prismatic significance of 1915, if indeed there is one. Either that or the filmmaker assumes we're happy to be, as Renoir liked his subjects, *flottant* (floating) in the landscape.

Wheelchair-bound and suffering from severe arthritis in his hands, the widowed Renoir, at 74, paints still-lifes in his atelier on the Côte d'Azur. When aspiring actress-model-dancer Dedée walks into the gated Renoir estate, the artist-patriarch is moved to start painting his nudes again. The girl, we discover, was the late Madame Renoir's dying provision – a 'gift' to her husband from beyond the grave. Or more likely a last attempt to steer her husband's amorous attentions, as she was known to do in life, helpless to prevent them altogether.

For a film about creative resuscitation, *Renoir* does little to lift its hero out of the history books. Bourdos's skeins of orange paint looping in slow motion in a jar of rinsing water (and other canned set pieces) have the opposite effect of embalming Renoir's subjects, his paintings, his memory. The only truly living thing in the film is Christa Théret as Dedée because she isn't a natural in front of the camera and her hunched shoulders and narrow-eyed affectation split the apple-rosy reverie with a reminder that she's an actress acting a role. Any film about an artist as illustrious as Renoir requires sensitive aesthetic treatment but Bourdos's unbroken orange-rinse to match



Broad brush: Michel Bouquet

Dedée's auburn hair feels literary, not painterly, and is unspecific. (It *could* be impressionist; it could be pre-Raphaelite; it could be anything.)

The film has intriguing elements, such as the relationship between Renoir and his middle son Jean (who would go on to make *La Grande Illusion* and *La Règle du jeu*). One might expect the artist's almost tyrannical carnality to cause a crisis of virility in his son, but this promising territory isn't fully explored; nor is the theme of the artist who finds fame in his lifetime. The film's uncommitted listing from one seam to another looks a lot like playing safe, as does the vacuity of the dialogue. (When asked by his younger brother Coco, "What's the war like?" Jean replies, "It's war.")

Renoir is too vague to be informative, too careful to be especially entertaining. Bourdos comes across as any well-meaning storyteller who loses himself in the framing detail and forgets the essential compass points of his story. S

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Olivier Delbos
Marc Missonnier
Original Screenplay
Jérôme Tonnerre
Gilles Bourdos
Script Collaborator
Michel Spinosa
Based on *Le Tableau amoureux* by Jacques Renoir
Cinematographer
Mark Ping-Bing Lee
Editor

Yannick Kergoat
Art Director
Benoit Barouh
Music
Alexandre Desplat
Sound
François Waledisch
Valérie Deloof
Costume Designer
Pascaline Chavanne
©Fidélité Films/Wild Bunch/Mars Films/

France 2 Cinéma
Production Companies
Fidélité present in association with Wild Bunch and Mars Films in co-production with France 2 Cinéma with the participation of Orange Cinéma Séries, France Télévisions, Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée

and the support of Région Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur
Executive Producer
Christine de Jekel
Film Extracts
Intolerance (1916)

Dedée'
Vincent Rottiers
Jean Renoir
Thomas Doret
Coco Renoir
Romane Bohringer
Gabrielle
Carlo Brandt
Dr Pratt
Hervé Briaux
Volland
Michèle Gleizer
Aline Renoir
Laurent Poitrenaux

Pierre Renoir
Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles
Distributor
Soda Pictures

The French Riviera, 1915. Recently widowed, elderly painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir is inspired to resume painting his famous nudes when a young woman – Dedée – arrives on the Renoir estate looking for work as a life-model. She poses for him, and moves into the house to live alongside the domestic maids. Renoir's son Jean, a cavalryman, returns from war on sick leave and notes the disappearance of his beloved childhood nanny Gabrielle. It transpires that she was forced out by Jean's mother because she had grown too close to Renoir. While

assisting his father at work, Jean falls in love with Dedée. She flirts with him, and after catching eels together, they make love. Jean, interested in moving pictures, screens his own film for the family. After flying a plane, Jean re-enlists with the air force. Dedée feels betrayed and runs away, leaving both Jean and his father bereft. Jean finds Dedée keeping debauched company in a seedy underground bar and brings her back to the estate. The family holds a picnic – with Gabrielle also present – and waves goodbye to Jean before his return to the war.

The Seasoning House

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Paul Hyett
Certificate 18 90m 0s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"The horror, the horror" are the last words uttered by Marlon Brando's Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), summarising the film's take on the moral revulsion engendered by the contradictions and chaos of war. *The Seasoning House* seems at first to be following a similar tack, while adopting an entirely female perspective.

Its events unfold from the point of view of diminutive teen Angel (Rosie Day), orphaned and abducted during the Bosnian War and now held captive with other young women in a brothel that has outlasted the conflict it was designed to service, as former militiamen continue their extralegal business under a different name. Angel is well placed to be the perfect eyewitness and silent cicerone through this murky, sordid world. After all, she has been granted relatively free passage in the house to carry out her duties (cleaning, feeding and drugging the women for the men who visit them); she is small enough to fit into the crawlspaces between the building's walls and move from room to room unnoticed; and she is deaf-mute and so can "hear no evil, speak no evil", as the brothel's owner Viktor (Kevin Howarth) says.

DP Adam Etherington's camera tracks Angel's sinuous expeditions through the grubby establishment, taking us on a commentary-free journey through the inner workings of what is described in the title as a 'seasoning house' (via the same sort of horrifying euphemism that also sees the chained inmates dubbed 'stock'). As in Elem Klimov's *Come and See* (1985) or perhaps more pertinently Juanita Wilson's insider account of war rape *As If I Am Not There* (2010), we are invited to be fellow witnesses to the traumatising and the unspeakable.

While war comes with its inherent horrors, unfortunately first-time director/co-writer Paul Hyett, who has an extensive background creating effects, gore and makeup for horror of a more generic kind (*The Descent*, *The Cottage*,



Avenging Angel: Rosie Day

Eden Lake), pushes the real-world theme of war crimes into the realms of pure exploitation in the film's second half. Once militia leader Goran (Sean Pertwee) and his men have arrived, the semi-documentary detailing of Angel's awful routine is overtaken by a conventional thriller plot in which the familiar genre tropes of rape revenge and, later, cat-and-mouse pursuit come to dominate. The very presence of British horror stalwarts Howarth (*The Last Horror Movie*, *Summer Scars*, *Gallowwalkers*) and Pertwee (*Dog Soldiers*, *Wilderness*, *Mutant Chronicles*) and – even more egregiously – a last-reel cameo from genre director Neil Marshall (*Dog Soldiers*, *The Descent*, *Doomsday*) remind and reassure viewers that this is only a (horror) movie; and while the final sequences unfold in deep, dark woods, pig-filled cottages and entrapping labyrinths, *The Seasoning House* (unlike, say, Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*) never fully integrates or justifies these fairytale motifs, so that they seem a mere stylistic device further distracting from the real issue of women's mistreatment during and after conflict. Ultimately the film reduces a nation's complicity in war atrocities to a Sadean variation on *The Perils of Pauline*, with the film's viewers uncomfortably cast as the paying customers for such dubious entertainments. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Michael Riley
Written by

Paul Hyett
Conal Palmer
Adrian Rignesford
From an original idea by Helen Solomon

Director of Photography

Adam Etherington

Editor

Agnieszka Liggett

Production Designer

Caroline Story

Music

Paul E. Francis

Sound Recordist

Peter Gaudino

Costume Designer

Raquel Azevedo

Production Companies

A Sterling Pictures production in association with Templeheart Films/Filmgate Films A Paul Hyett film

Executive Producers

Lyndon Baldock
Neil Jones
Patrick Fischer

Cast

Rosie Day
Angel
Sean Pertwee
Goran
Kevin Howarth
Viktor
Anna Walton
Violeta
Jemma Powell
Alexa
David Lemberg
Dimitri
Amanda Wass
Arijana
Sean Cronin
Branimir
Tomi May
Aleksander
Emma Britton
Samira
Emily Tucker
Nina
Katy Allen
Tatjana

Dominique Provost-Chalkley

Vanya
Alec Utgoff
Josif
Ryan Oliva
Ivan
Daniel Vivian
Radovan
James Bartlett
Marko

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Kaleidoscope

Entertainment

8,100 ft +0 frames

The Balkans, 1996. Abducted during the Bosnian War by Goran and his militiamen after she witnessed them murdering her mother, a deaf-mute girl is now captive in a brothel. Its owner Viktor calls her 'Angel' and protects her from having to service other men, but in return she must share his bed and keep house (feeding and drugging the chained female 'stock' and cleaning up after the male guests). Moving unseen through the house's crawlspaces, Angel befriends Vanya and witnesses her ill-treatment by a violent client, and then by the elderly doctor who is paid in kind for examining her. Viktor entrusts Angel with house keys.

Goran, his younger brother Josif and fellow militiamen Ivan, Marko and Radovan visit. Angel attacks and kills Ivan after he strangles Vanya during sex. Marko falls to his death pursuing Angel in the crawl space; Viktor, after surreptitiously shooting Radovan himself, blames Angel for the death. Angel flees into the woods. Viktor catches her but in a standoff with the two brothers he shoots Josif, and is in turn shot by Goran. Angel flees to a house where she is tended by a woman who happens to be Goran's wife. After a phone call, the woman tries to detain Angel, and is killed in a vicious struggle. Goran chases Angel into a factory but becomes trapped in some pipes. Angel seeks refuge in another farmhouse, whose owner, the doctor, closes the door behind her.

Shun Li and the Poet

Italy/France 2011
Director: Andrea Segre
Certificate 15 97m 39s

Reviewed by Sukhdev Sandhu

Europe is both fortress and freedom in the work of Italian documentarian Andrea Segre. It offers the promise of being a newfound land of economic opportunities, a refuge from bloody wars, a hospital for psychological repair. But the reality is very different: Segre's 2012 documentary *Closed Sea* contained extraordinary footage, self-generated using mobile phones, of a boatful of starving and sunburnt Somalians and Ethiopians cheering because they think the helicopter circling them is there to help; in fact they are detained and treated like prisoners. Meanwhile *The Green Blood* (2010) portrayed not only the exploitation of African labourers in the fields of Calabria but also their violent treatment at the hands of xenophobic thugs.

On the face of it, Segre's feature debut *Shun Li and the Poet* is a less pointed dispatch from the frontlines of the New Europe, the Chinese workers on whom it dwells tending to be a less visible or instantly exorcised set of migrants than those hailing from North Africa or the Middle East. It's pitched as a cross-racial romance, a micro-genre that allows humanistic directors to downplay politics in favour of the beating of the human heart. It also uses another standard prop of humanism – poetry – as a way of celebrating cultural translation and the ties that bind people from different backgrounds.

That it never descends into sentimental slush is partly because of Segre's feel – both tender and tart – for the moods and landscape of the Chioggia fishing community near Venice where his story is set. His mother was born there and he knows intimately those parts of the region where tourists rarely deign to tread. Slimy walkways, eczematic walls, melancholic mist, cafés that are flooded every so often: this is something of a backwater, a home for jowly fishermen who, like many port dwellers, combat the turbulence of the waves over which they sail daily by talking up local mores and traditions. But it's far from being what cultural geographer Mike Davis would call an evil paradise.

The lead characters – their affinities and differences – are subtly evoked: both Shun Li and Bepi 'the Poet' come from nations fractured by versions of Marxism (China and Yugoslavia respectively); both are separated from their children (Shun Li is forced to pay back 'snakeheads' before she can be reunited with her eight-year-old boy, the widowed Bepi prefers living alone in a fishing hut to moving in with his son); she is journeying through new languages and circumstances, while he is marinated in barely articulable memories. The excellent leads – Zhao Tao (a Jia Zhangke regular) and Rade Sherbedgia – never strain for emotion, allowing understatement and hushed gazes to convey their growing dependence.

What the pair have in common, apart from their outsider status, is a love of water. Shun Li comes from a family of fishermen and attracts Bepi partly through the delicacy with which she explains the Chinese tradition of floating tiny lanterns to protect the soul of the third-century poet Qu Yuan. The film, more than Aki Kaurismäki's *Le Havre* (2011), Maggie Peren's *Colour of the Ocean* (2011) or Andrea Kunkl,

Stand Up Guys

USA 2012
Director: Fisher Stevens

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

For most of the 20th century, changes in life-expectancy being what they are, few if any box-office heavyweights continued headlining into their autumn years (Clark Gable was only 59 when he died, and John Wayne's last film was made when he was 69). Today, in the extreme years of Clint and Jack (83 and 76 respectively), the persistence of stars who emerged four or five decades ago has given us a handful of relatively new subgenres, including the geriatric buddy film. Audiences are living longer too, and it's not difficult to empathise with the still-active moviegoing septuagenarian who has no interest in figuring out who or what Chris Hemsworth is. In any case, in films from *Space Cowboys* to *The Bucket List* to the new *Stand Up Guys*, you see an often ignored patch of the populace get their due – and with it, helplessly, a barely subtextual megadose of mortality and melancholy. Every movie starring more than one post-retirement actor is a movie about the proximity of death, and *Stand Up Guys* takes the message on explicitly if predictably, detailing the final night of retired gangsters Christopher Walken (70), Al Pacino (73) and Alan Arkin (79) as they're forced to face the bloodletting past.

The results are mostly what you'd expect: jokes about geriatric life commingled with post-Tarantino gangster banter, crusty old-man crankiness skewed as cute comedy, retro jukebox blues on the soundtrack and slovenly filmmaking (the director, actor Fisher Stevens, has made mostly documentary shorts and episodic TV). First-timer Noah Haidle's thin script doesn't offer much to work with after we're informed that Walken's fussy retiree, once he picks up a paroled Pacino, is obligated by a vicious mobster to whack his friend before the night is through.

It sounds dire but in fact the schtick and stereotypes soon recede to a bearable degree and the film turns out to be fine company, full of nuanced semi-improv repartee between relaxed pros and the aforementioned undercurrent of mourning and rue. Pacino begins by doing a spot-on rendition of a cheap stand-up Pacino impressionist; who would've thought in the 1970s that he'd evolve into such an obnoxious, mannered mess? But eventually he powers down and falls into the film's more reserved rhythms, which are entirely dictated



Fisherman's friend: Rade Sherbedgia and Zhao Tao

Giuseppe Fanizza and Giorgia Serughetti's *Mare Nostrum* (2010), counterpoises the fetishisation of globalising speed, aeroplanes and technology, gesturing instead to what subaltern liquidity might look like: migrants seen as flotsam or as engulfs of settled communities, caught in socioeconomic nets not of their own making, disappearing – or being disappeared – like ebbing waves.

Segre might have done more to prepare us for the key role played by Lian, Shun Li's fellow bonded-migrant and roommate, but he and co-screenwriter Marco Pettenello do well not to over-lard the story or push it towards the melodramatic terrain of *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002). The self-enclosed, partly self-protecting world

that the Chinese inhabit is succinctly evoked in Lian's admonition to her friend: "Italians are our customers." The emphasis on the drinking debts that the Chioggians run up and sometimes pay off suggests a tentative point of contact between the working-class Italians and the Chinese migrants.

Delicately photographed by Luca Bigazzi and scored by François Couturier, *Shun Li and the Poet* is a significant contribution to the ever-growing body of European migrant cinema, not so much for any aesthetic innovations as for the scrupulous care, fragile beauty and lingering power with which Segre delineates the possibilities – and limits – of intimacy. It also confirms his status as one of the most impressive Italian filmmakers currently working. **◎**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Francesco Bonsembiante
Francesca Feder

Producer

Nicola Rosada

Screenplay

Marcos Pettenello
Andrea Segre

Story

Andrea Segre

Cinematographer

Luca Bigazzi

Editor

Sara Zavarise

Art Director

Leonardo Scarpa

Music

François Couturier

Sound Recordist

Alessandro Zanon

Costumes

Maria Rita Barbera

Production Companies

©Jolefilm s.r.l.,

Æternum Films

Films S.a.r.l., ARTE

France Cinéma

Production Companies

AJolefilm,

Æternum Films

Films production

In collaboration

With Rai Cinema

In co-production with

ARTE France Cinéma

With the support of

Eurimages and

Regione del Veneto

With the participation of

ARTE France

In association with

Marlin srl, Tasci

srl, Bencom srl,

Nordesteuropa

Editore srl

With the collaboration

of Comune di

Chioggia

With the support

of Roma Lazio Film

Commission

Cast

Zhao Tao

Shun Li

Rade Sherbedgia

Bepi, 'the Poet'

Marco Paolini

Coppe

Roberto Citran

lawyer

Giuseppe Battiston

Devis

Giordano Bacci

Baffo

Spartaco Mainardi

Maicol

Zhong Cheng

Zang

Wang Yuan

Lian

Amleto Voltolina

Bode

Andrea Pennacchi

Sandro

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Artificial Eye Film Company

8,788 ft +8 frames

Italian theatrical title

Io sono Li

Rome, present day. Shun Li is a Chinese migrant working in a garment factory on the outskirts of Rome and saving all her money so that she can bring her young son to live with her in Italy. One day she is transferred to Chioggia, a small island in the Venetian lagoon, where she works as a bartender at a local osteria. There she meets Bepi, an older fisherman who hails from Yugoslavia and is known to his friends as 'the Poet'. In spite of the difference in their ages and her faltering command of Italian, they strike up a relationship, attracting the hostile gossip of both Chinese and Chioggian communities. Shun Li is told

by her overseers that she must stop seeing Bepi or run the risk of her debt levels rising and so not being able to see her son. Bepi meanwhile gets into a fight with a yob outside the osteria. Finally Shun Li leaves Chioggia and finds a new job in a textile firm where one day she is surprised by the sudden appearance of her son: it transpires that a mysterious benefactor has paid off her debts. Returning to Chioggia, she learns that her patron is her former roommate Lian, who has since disappeared. Asking after Bepi, she learns that he left Chioggia and died, bequeathing her his small fishing hut, which she torches in a quiet ceremonial.



Old men in a hurry: Pacino, Walken, Punch, Arkin

Star Trek Into Darkness

USA 2013
Director: J.J. Abrams
Certificate 12A 131m 58s

by Walken. Looking scarily corpse-like, especially when Stevens doesn't bother to light him decently, Walken's Doc is a reticent, weary man committed to taking his meds and enjoying his cable TV; as usual, the actor's line readings are effortlessly odd and hilarious, and his timing is diamond-cut. Arkin, on screen for only around 20 minutes, also offers a masterclass in bouncing conversation and for a while the film has a pleasant sadness to it, a sense radiating from the actors that the fun they're having and the time they're having it in may soon be in radically short supply.

But then there's the stolen sports car with the naked girl in the trunk, the turnaround escape in a police-car chase, the terminal emphysema everyone forgets about, the embarrassing cameo by Julianna Margulies as an ER nurse, the brothel with the wholesome-ironic young madam (Lucy Punch), the fistful of Viagra, the middle-of-the-night burial, the film-student attempts at gun-toting violence – a litany of adolescent plot invention that should shame Stevens and the film's army of producers, if not the stars, who seem far more interested in just talking to each other than working out the script's mechanics, and who have long earned their time in the shade.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Tom Rosenberg
Gary Lucchesi
Sidney Kimmel

Written by

Noah Haidle
Jim Tauber

Director of Photography

Michael Grady

Editor

Mark Livolsi

Production Designer

Maher Ahmad

Music

Lyle Workman

Sound Mixer

Steve Morrow

Costume Designer

Lindsay Ann McKey

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Production Companies

Lionsgate,
Sidney Kimmel
Entertainment
and Lakeshore
Entertainment

present a Lionsgate/
Sidney Kimmel
Entertainment/
Lakeshore

Entertainment
production

Executive Producers

Eric Reid

Ted Gidlow

Bruce Toll

Bingham Ray

Matt Berenson

Cast

Al Pacino

Val

Christopher Walken

Doc

Alan Arkin

Hirsch

Julianna Margulies

Nina Hirsch

Mark Margolis
Claphams

Lucy Punch
Wendy

Addison Timlin
Alex

Vanessa Ferlito
Sylvia

Katheryn Winnick

Oxana

Bill Burr
Larry

Dolby Digital/
Datasat

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Entertainment Film
Distributors Ltd

US, the present. Old-timer gangster Val is released from prison and is picked up by his old comrade Doc. As the two bicker, eat out, visit a brothel and indulge Val's hunger for drink, sex and pills, it is revealed that Doc has to kill Val, in retribution for a mobster's dead son, or be killed himself. An overdose of Viagra necessitates a visit to the hospital, where the nurse turns out to be the daughter of another colleague, Hirsch. As Doc avoids his task, he and Val break Hirsch out of his nursing home. They steal a car; finding a young woman in the trunk who's been kidnapped and raped, they track down the perpetrators and exact justice on them. Val guesses that he will be killed, and guesses that Doc has been chosen to do the job. Hirsch dies suddenly in their parked car. After burying him, Doc and Val steal new suits and decide to face off against the old mobster together. Before they do, Doc leaves his savings and apartment to the young waitress at his regular diner – she is in fact his granddaughter.

Pod people: Zachary Quinto, Benedict Cumberbatch and Chris Pine

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

An advantage that science-fiction/fantasy sagas such as *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who* and the DC or Marvel superhero continuities have over more grounded franchises like the James Bond series is that weird science can be used to reboot lead characters (or the entire universe) to keep up with audiences. J.J. Abrams's *Star Trek* (2009) had a time-travelling villain shift all of Gene Roddenberry's franchise into an alternate timeline whose sole survivor was Spock Prime (Leonard Nimoy), while establishing a fresh cast as new, rethought-for-the-21st-century versions of the characters from the 1960s TV show. Abrams signalled a willingness to wreak large-scale change on a well-established fictional universe by blowing up the planet Vulcan, though the point of the exercise was more likely to update the old show's less forward-thinking attitudes by making Zoë Saldana's Uhura a

more proactive character (here, she's the only crew member who can speak Klingon).

At the end of *Star Trek*, Spock Prime rather prissily decided not to give his young alternate (Zachary Quinto) spoilers about what was coming – though, with the whole universe already altered, it seems unfair not to mention, say, that when McCoy runs into his ex-girlfriend she'll be an alien salt vampire (as seen in the 1966 TV episode 'The Man Trap'). Here, the venerable survivor is consulted briefly and confirms that, in his universe, Khan was one of the worst threats the *Enterprise* ever faced – though someone who has experienced alternate timelines (as Spock did in the 1967 episode 'Mirror, Mirror') should perhaps give the rebooted Khan the benefit of the doubt.

The tendency of inward-looking franchises to disappear up their own black holes is not entirely avoided by Abrams's fanboyish decision to present the whole of *Star Trek Into Darkness* as a revision of Nicholas Meyer's *Star Trek II: The*

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

J.J. Abrams

Bryan Burk

Damon Lindelof

Alex Kurtzman

Roberto Orci

Alex Kurtzman

Damon Lindelof

Based upon *Star*

Trek created by

Gene Roddenberry

Director of Photography

Dan Mindel

Edited by

Mary Jo Markey

Maryann Brandon

Production Designer

Scott Chambliss

Music

Michael Giacchino

Supervising Sound Editor/ Sound Designer

Ben Burtt

Costume Designer

Michael Kaplan

Visual Effects/ Animation

Industrial Light & Magic

Atomic Fiction

Visual Effects

Pixomondo

Kelvin Optical, Inc.

Stunt Co-ordinator

John Stoneham Jr

©Paramount Pictures

Corporation

Production Companies

Paramount Pictures

and Skydance

Productions present a

Bad Robot production

A.J.J. Abrams film

Executive Producers

Jeffrey Chernov

David Ellison

Dana Goldberg

Paul Schwake

Chris Pine

Captain James Kirk

Zachary Quinto

Spock

Zoë Saldana

Uhura

Karl Urban

McCoy

Peter Weller

Admiral Marcus

Anton Yelchin

Chekov

DeLuxe

[2.35:1]

Some screenings

presented in 3D

Distributor

Paramount

Pictures UK

11,877 ft +0 frames

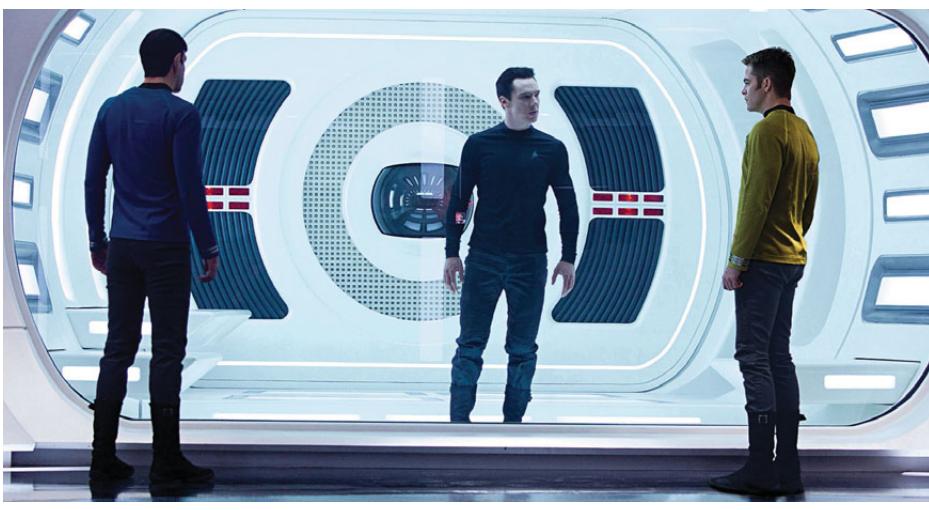
IMAX prints

133m 5s

191,633 ft

After violating the Federation's prime directive by saving a primitive planet, Captain James T. Kirk is relieved of command of the USS 'Enterprise' by his mentor, Admiral Pike. John Harrison, a rogue Federation agent, stages an attack on Starfleet high command in which Pike is killed, prompting Admiral Marcus to reinstate Kirk and despatch the 'Enterprise' to assassinate Harrison, who is hiding on Kronos, homeworld of the warlike Klingon empire. Cautious about triggering a war, Kirk opts to capture Harrison, who reveals that he is Khan, a genetic superman from Earth's past; he has been revived from cryogenic suspension by

Marcus, who is forcing him to foment a Federation-Klingon war. Kirk and Khan ally when Marcus attacks the 'Enterprise' with a warship, and the renegade officer is killed. Khan betrays Kirk by sabotaging the 'Enterprise' and vows to revive his fellow supermen to conquer and destroy. Kirk saves the damaged 'Enterprise' seemingly at the cost of his life. Mr Spock, the ship's science officer and Kirk's friend, pursues Khan to Earth to kill him, but medical officer Dr McCoy persuades him that Kirk can be revived by a transfusion of Khan's blood. Spock subdues Khan, and Kirk is saved. The 'Enterprise' departs on a five-year mission.



Stories We Tell

Canada 2012
Director: Sarah Polley
Certificate 12A 108m 46s

Wrath of Khan (1982), generally regarded as the best of the original ten-film *Star Trek* movie series. His climax is a mirror-image of *Star Trek II* – with Kirk sacrificing his life (temporarily) by exposing himself to radiation to fix a malfunctioning part of the *Enterprise's* engine (in a manner that also evokes the knowing spoof *Galaxy Quest*) as Spock did in the earlier movie, while Spock gets to bellow William Shatner's once-upon-a-time signature line ("Khaaaaaaaal!") as he vows to avenge his fallen friend. Even Alice Eve's Dr Carol Marcus is a reboot of an often-forgotten *Wrath of Khan* character (played by Bibi Besch) briefly established as the love of Kirk's busy life (and mother of his quickly-killed-off son) at a point when fan speculation that the married-to-his-ship Lothario's real romantic relationship was with Spock had become a mainstream studio concern. Benedict Cumberbatch's baddie is denuded of the complex ethnicity of Ricardo Montalban's Khan Noonien Singh – a Hispanic with an Asian name, introduced in the original series in the episode 'Space Seed' – and relies on fiendish, bug-eyed Alan Rickman-for-the-new-millennium gurning to make an impact.

There's no denying that *Star Trek Into Darkness* is fun in the way too many of the ponderous original-cast movies were not. It delivers a succession of high-speed action scenes, from space battles to fistfights, with interspersed character bits ranging from comic (Kirk in bed with twin tail-twitching alien babes) to emotional (Kirk's mentor dying in his arms). It blithely goes against Scotty's old catchphrase "Ye cannae change the laws of physics" whenever it needs to – indeed, Simon Pegg's Scotty whips up interstellar teleportation technology and benefits from instantaneous hyperspace telephony just to keep the story going, though such innovations would radically alter the fundamental assumptions of the *Star Trek* universe. More subtly, Abrams addresses criticism of the franchise's militarism by stressing that the heroes' mission is exploration not warfare, bringing on a mad admiral and pitting the *Enterprise* against an armoured, bullying starship designed only for combat. Chris Pine and Zachary Quinto continue to channel Shatner and Nimoy while presenting different versions of the well-known characters, and the rest of the regular cast all have moments in which they shine.

Still, by stepping into another universe, there is an inevitable distancing effect. 'Space Seed' was a science-fiction story about the intrusion of a warlike past into a utopian future, with a complex attitude to its anachronistic warrior – Kirk even admired and envied the genetically enhanced Khan. *Star Trek II The Wrath of Khan* was already more concerned with fan-pleasing minutiae than the real-world issues addressed by the original series. *Star Trek Into Darkness* only touches on terrorism (Khan persuades a Starfleet minion to become a suicide bomber) and warmongering as they relate to its spin on Roddenberry's vision. Like much contemporary *Doctor Who*, *Star Trek* risks being about *itself* to the exclusion of anything else. *Into Darkness* sets off on a mission to revisit places we have gone before in a manner that needs to be broken with if the franchise is to live long and prosper under Abrams's captaincy. **S**



Family movie: Sarah Polley

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Coverage of Sarah Polley's first documentary feature *Stories We Tell* has focused on the director's discovery of her paternity, a subject of some gossip in the Canadian press since it concerns not only Polley but also leading Canadian film producer Harry Gulin. Yet, as Polley insists from behind the camera when her siblings challenge her about her investment in the documentary, it is not about her father(s), but about her mother.

At the centre of the film is a black-and-white audition reel of Diane Polley speak-singing "Ain't Misbehavin'" straight to camera. It's an adorable, irresistible performance – one that becomes more so the more we hear about her life and its resemblance to the song. Diane's trajectory matches that of many women in post-war North America, as women's lib was vaunted but society and legislation resisted. Married in the 1960s to a wealthy scion of Toronto society, she rebelled, falling for English actor Michael Polley, who was performing in the Canadian premiere of Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. Toronto the Good, as it was known, was unprepared for such liberated behaviour: as a newspaper article shows, she lost custody of her son John and daughter Susy on moral grounds.

Michael suggests early on that Diane fell for his role in Pinter's play – an angry young rebel very different from the genial man he really was. They subsequently married, and acted together twice, the second time in *Filomena*, on which the 1964 Sofia Loren vehicle *Marriage Italian Style* was based. A play about an independent woman that turns on a question of her children's paternity, it seems almost as overdetermined

a resonance in the film as 'Ain't Misbehavin'' and the title of Gulin's Oscar-nominated 1975 feature *Lies My Father Told Me*. Further, Polley's previous films, *Away from Her* (2006) and *Take This Waltz* (2011), were preoccupied with questions of marital fidelity and the vagaries of memory, as if pre-telling this story.

Here, we see Sarah acting in *Mister Nobody*, whose protagonist narrates multiple incompatible life stories to a reporter. While on set, Polley was contacted by a reporter wanting to publish the story of her discovery before she had told Michael. The conversation this prompted led Michael to write his version of the story, which he reads as the voiceover narration to the film. The viewer knows this because *Stories We Tell*, uniquely, reveals its process as if we are thinking, sifting and selecting along with the filmmaker. We see Michael and Sarah in the recording studio, focusing on moments when she directs him to "take back" a line that he's overplayed. Even the soundtrack – mostly populated by excerpts from *Play Me a Movie*, Abraham Lass's 1971 Smithsonian recording based on his repertoire as a neighbourhood movie pianist in the 1920s – uses knowing humour as it conjures a phantom paradigmatic film from our memories, all the while taking apart its conventional narrative of love and marriage.

The reflexivity is enhanced, but never exaggerated, by the family's involvement in theatre and film. John, Sarah's oldest sibling and Diane's assistant in her casting business, is the most camera-aware, offering a waspish, self-deprecating and transparent take on the kind of reflexivity that characterised the early films of Atom Egoyan, one of Polley's key

 influences. It has to be a knowing gesture that John has visible in the book stack behind him a Penguin Classics copy of *Anna Karenina*. Like 'Ain't Misbehavin'', Tolstoy's novel offers a reflection of Diane's life, highlighting the distortions that patriarchy produces in women's stories as they are lived and then inherited.

Joanna's comment, when asked what changed for the family after the revelation of Sarah's paternity, that all three sisters got divorced, is a subtle marker of social as well as personal change. Never overt, Polley's documentary embraces both the political and cinematic heritage of feminism, particularly the seminal film *Daughter Rite*, which screened internationally in 1978, the year Polley was conceived. Polley, of course, couldn't have seen it at the time but Michelle Citron's unique and influential combination of optically printed home movies, *vérité* footage revealed to be staged and poetic voiceover is deeply woven into the DNA of *Stories We Tell*.

Where Citron's 'daughter rite' was one of an adult daughter's separation from the mother, Polley's is one of reunion. The use of reconstructed footage shot on a Super 8 camera closes the film with startling 'off-camera' shots of the adult Sarah directing her mother, played by Rebecca Jenkins. Canny in their uncanniness, the two women's intimate conversation held in privacy under the dark folk song of the soundtrack, these impossibly moving and movingly impossible shots are the telling heart of the story. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Anita Lee	Costume Designer Sarah Armstrong	Film Extracts <i>Anna Christie</i> (1930) <i>Matrimonio all'italiana/Marriage Italian Style</i> (1964)
Written by Sarah Polley	©National Film Board of Canada	
Michael's Narration	Production Companies The National Film Board of Canada presents	
Written by Michael Polley	Distributor Artificial Eye Film Company	
Director of Photography Iris Ng	9,789 ft +0 frames	
Editor Michael Munn		
Production Designer Lea Carlson		
Sound Recordist Sanjay Mehta		

Toronto, the present. Canadian actor and filmmaker Sarah Polley interviews family and friends about their memories of her mother Diane, who died of cancer when Sarah was 11. Sarah's father Michael and her older siblings – John, Mark, Susy and Joanna – recollect family life before Sarah's birth and after Diane's death. Diane's friends and colleagues, including leading Canadian film producer Harry Gulkin, talk about her professional life as an actor and casting director, and the tensions this caused in her marriage. Diverging portraits, depicted through real and reconstructed footage of family and theatrical life in the 60s and 70s, highlight Diane's complexity and reveal the secret she kept: an affair while acting in Montreal in 1978, before Sarah was born. What starts as a family joke about Sarah's appearance in relation to Michael's is confirmed when a chance meeting with Harry reveals that he was Diane's lover, and may be Sarah's biological father. Sarah's decision to pursue DNA testing and a relationship with Harry creates changes in her family life, and particularly her relationship with Michael, whose letter, written after she tells him about Harry, constitutes the voiceover narration of the film.

Stuck in Love

USA 2012
Director: Josh Boone
Certificate 15 96m 50s

Reviewed by Sanam Maher

Writer-director Josh Boone makes no bones about the fact that *Stuck in Love* is his attempt to rewrite a significant moment in his life: the film recasts his parents' painful divorce as a redemptive story of true love and the importance of family. Set over a year, between one Thanksgiving and the next, it sees novelist Bill Borgens (Greg Kinnear) and his children Samantha (Lily Collins) and Rusty (Nat Wolff) piecing their lives together after Bill's wife Erica (Jennifer Connelly) leaves him for another man. They deal with her remarriage in their own ways: Bill spends his nights peeking in at the windows of Erica's house to watch her having sex with her new husband, Samantha perfects her tough-girl exterior and Rusty treads the line between both families by having two Thanksgivings and two Christmases. Boone's approach is heavyhanded and melodramatic: Erica, for instance, ponders her estrangement from Samantha while reading Joan Didion's *Blue Nights* (about the death of Didion's daughter). Seeking to 'cure' the cynic in us all, the film ends with Samantha abandoning her black-and-white romantic-or-realistic approach to love when she meets a sweet-natured musician who cares for his sick mother. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Judy Cairo	Distributor Patrick W. Dugan Jeff Rice Myles Nestel Lisa Wilson
Written by Josh Boone	
Director of Photography Tim Orr	
Film Editor Robb Sullivan	
Production Designer Jennifer Connolly	
Music Mike Mogis	
Sound Mixer Nathaniel Walcott	
Costume Designer John Sanders	
©Writers the Movie, LLC	
Production Companies Informant Media presents in association with MICA Entertainment and The Solution Entertainment Group an Informant Films production	
Executive Producers Michael A. Simpson	
Producers Eric Brenner	
Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]	
Distributor Artificial Eye Film Company	
9,789 ft +0 frames	

US, present day. Novelist Bill Borgens is struggling to come to terms with his ex-wife Erica's new marriage. Daughter Samantha refuses to speak to Erica, while son Rusty divides his time between both parents. Bill's neighbour Tricia convinces him to date other women. Samantha falls in love with musician Lou. Rusty enters a relationship with Kate, a classmate with drug and alcohol problems. Erica admits to Bill that she has doubts about her new marriage. Bill tells Samantha that he's waiting for Erica to return because he once cheated on her and she waited for him. At Thanksgiving, Samantha, Lou, Bill and Rusty are sitting down to dinner when the doorbell rings – Erica has returned.

Summer in February

United Kingdom/USA 2013
Director: Christopher Menaul
Certificate 15 100m 41s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

British television's fascination with the pre-WWI antics of the upper classes, explored soapily in *Downton Abbey* and more severely in the BBC adaptation of *Parade's End*, appears here to have leaked into British film. Christopher Menaul's prettily period but emotionally pallid tale of adultery in the Newlyn School artists' colony is dutifully riddled with picturesque assignations and tense afternoon teas, tearful suicide attempts and mention of the hideous modernist "Piss ac". All this is mere window-dressing, however, for the film's real draw, stiff-upper-lipped *Downton Abbey* star Dan Stevens (the film's producer and co-leading man), who the filmmakers are betting can lure legions of fans to a *Masterpiece Theatre*-styled middlebrow melodrama casting him in a handsome period role comfortably similar to the one that made him famous.

Though it avoids the whiff of the vanity project (Stevens plays the diffident, almost self-effacing element in the film's love tangle), the film will leave viewers seeking the robust narrative thrills of *Downton Abbey* disappointed. Adapted by Jonathan Smith from his novel exploring the real-life love triangle between painter A.J. Munnings, his fragile young wife Florence and his close friend Gilbert Evans (a book based on Evans's diaries), the film feels curiously timid and inauthentic, for all its careful attention to historical fact. Draping key scenes around British impressionists briskly producing work *en plein air* – Munnings is shown knocking off both Florence and his famed equestrian portrait of her, *The Morning Ride*, in a triumph of multi-tasking – ensures that the film gives a heavyhanded biopic view of love among the artists.

To bolster its slender central drama, Smith's screenplay toys half-heartedly with the plight of the female artist as Florence struggles to paint in Munnings's shadow. Her tentative attempts are soon abandoned but they contrast tellingly with the vital, confident portraits generated by the Newlyn School's female figurehead Laura Knight (a stoical Hattie Morahan), included here as a supporting character for her unrequited crush on Munnings as well as for her oeuvre. Smith, a first-time screenwriter, works in the broadest of strokes, portraying the central trio's class-clash via Munnings's crowning delight at bagging a well-bred "filly", and setting it noisily against Evans's crippling emotional reticence.

Since the Newlyn School colony at Lamorna wasn't, unlike Bloomsbury, a hotbed of transgressive creativity and confessional memoirs, both script and performances give the impression of being concocted from biographical crumbs. Where *Carrington* (1995) or even TV's *Portrait of a Marriage* (1990) could create detailed portraits of triangular love affairs defying social norms, *Summer in February*'s narrative is sketchier, its confrontations generically melodramatic. Both Dan Stevens's stiff portrayal of Evans and Dominic Cooper's self-consciously showboating Munnings are essentially three-word characterisations (respectively 'kind, reserved, gentlemanly' and 'chippy, arrogant, womaniser'). Yet somehow Florence, darting from



Cornish pastiche: Stevens and Browning

trapped fury to dull-eyed acceptance of her lot, gives off a complex and defiant vitality in Emily Browning's deceptively doll-faced performance.

Director Christopher Menaul, who has vast television experience, gives the proceedings the glossy feel of a classy BBC adaptation. But he misses a trick by not using Laura Knight's breezy views of Lamorna as a consistent visual reference to give his film the kind of distinctive texture that *Parade's End* achieved by echoing the paintings of Eric Ravilious and Paul Nash in its landscapes and battlefields. *Summer in February* prefers to concentrate on its eye-catching emotional turmoil, leaving the struggle to make art – and even the art itself – firmly in the background. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Jeremy Cowdrey
Janette Day
Pippa Cross
Dan Stevens

Screenplay

Jonathan Smith
Based on his novel

Director of Photography

Andrew Dunn

Editors

Chris Gill
St. John O'Rorke

Production Designer

Sophie Becher

Music

Benjamin Wallfisch

Sound Recordist

Martin Trevis

Costume Designer

Nic Ede

©Summer in February Film

Limited Production Companies

ACrossDay and Apart Films production in association with Marwood Pictures and Speranza 13 Media

Afilm by Christopher Menaul

Executive Producers

Bruno Wu
Stephen Henderson

Cast

Dominic Cooper
Alfred Munnings, AJ'

Dan Stevens
Gilbert Evans

Emily Browning

Florence Carter Wood

Hattie Morahan

Laura Knight
Shaun Dingwall
Harold Knight

Max Deacon

Joey Carter Wood
Mia Austen

Dolly

Nicholas Farrell
Mr Carter Wood

Michael Maloney

Colonel Paynter

Dolby Digital In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Metrodome

Distribution Ltd

9,061 ft +8 frames

This Is the End

USA 2013

Directors: Seth Rogen, Evan Goldberg

Certificate 15 106m 32s

Reviewed by Ryan Gilbey

The modern-day slacker-com has gone through several cycles in the past few decades, including the mid-1990s films of Kevin Smith and those written, produced and/or directed by Judd Apatow ("It's like [Apatow and friends] are making movies like I made," Smith said in 2006, "but they're doing them with famous people and making shitloads of money"). It's still not a genre in itself so much as a sensibility shaped by its encounters with other genres: it collided with the romcom in *Knocked Up* (2007), the thriller in *Pineapple Express* (2008), the superhero movie in *The Green Hornet* (2011), and so on. The common factor in those films was Seth Rogen, the Fozzie Bear-like stoner who now graduates to multi-hyphenate status in *This Is the End*, which he acts in, co-writes and co-directs (with his regular collaborator Evan Goldberg). The slackers face their greatest challenge here: surviving the apocalypse, which provides the fiery backdrop to the usual drugs and dirty talk when it hits their upmarket LA neighbourhood. The filmmakers face a challenge of their own: to make a horror-comedy that is frightening and funny without one element smothering the other.

The results are mixed. For the opening half-hour, the film (adapted from the little-seen 2007 short *Jay and Seth vs the Apocalypse*, which Rogen and Goldberg made with Jason Stone) does no wrong. The stroke of genius lies in having the cast play slightly warped versions of themselves: non-LA dweller Jay Baruchel plays up his outsider status when he arrives in town to hang out with Rogen, who has prepared a bongs-and-videogames weekend for his old pal. But it's a trip to a raucous party that provides comedy gold; the party is hosted by James Franco (druggy, pretentious, goofily gay) with guests including Jonah Hill (precious, phoney and high on his Oscar nomination) and, playing wildly against the grain of his nice-guy persona, Michael Cera, who's busy snorting cocaine and receiving bathroom blowjobs.

All this plays like a student version of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, and there's so much mileage here that it's rather a pity when the movie



Franco, Hill, Robinson, Rogen, Baruchel, McBride

turns into a full-on special-effects extravaganza, with a fire-and-brimstone apocalypse hitting Hollywood and forcing the stars to hide out at Franco's place. Petty resentments and rivalries surface, as does Danny McBride, Rogen and Franco's oafish *Pineapple Express* co-star, whom nobody appears to like (we can well sympathise). The film falls apart. Lavish, *Ghostbusters*-style special effects provide an odd counterpoint to improvisatory banter, making the movie seem both meticulous and ramshackle at the same time. A steal from *Rosemary's Baby*, in which Hill is apparently raped by a demon, leads into the kind of pastiche of *The Exorcist* that was old hat even in the days of the 1990 Leslie Nielsen horror spoof *Repossessed*, let alone the *Scary Movie* series.

It's also a depressingly male vision: women get no more than walk-on parts to provide glamour (Rihanna) or an opportunity for rape jokes (Emma Watson), the better to leave space for the men to explore their homoeroticism. A seemingly endless argument about who got semen on James Franco's favourite porn magazine, and a cameo by Channing Tatum, playing McBride's sex slave in a pink gimp mask, are among the scenes that render explicit those desires that would typically remain latent in male-oriented US comedy. Keeping up the strike-rate of that first, killer half-hour would have been even more commendable. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Seth Rogen
Evan Goldberg

James Weaver

Screen Story/ Screenplay

Seth Rogen

Evan Goldberg

Based on the

short film *Seth*

and *Jay* versus

the *Apocalypse*

by Jason Stone

Executive Producers

Nathan Kahane

Nicole Brown

Jason Stone

Barbara A. Hall

Ariel Shaffir

Kyle Hunter

Director of Photography

Brandon Trost

Editor

Zene Baker

Production Designer

Chris Spellman

Music

Henry Jackman

Production Sound Mixer

John Pritchett

Costume Designer

Danny Glicker

©Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.

Production Companies

Columbia Pictures presents a Point Grey/Mandate

Pictures production

Executive Producers

Nathan Kahane

Nicole Brown

Jason Stone

Barbara A. Hall

Ariel Shaffir

Kyle Hunter

Director

Seth Rogen

Cast

James Franco

Jonah Hill

Seth Rogen

Jay Baruchel

Danny McBride

Craig Robinson

Michael Cera

Emma Watson

Mindy Kaling

David Krumholtz

Los Angeles, the present. Jay Baruchel is visiting his friend and fellow actor Seth Rogen; he is chagrined to be taken to a party at the house of James Franco (who, he protests, doesn't know who he is), where the guests will include Jonah Hill (who he suspects doesn't like him).

Other stars at the party include Michael Cera, who is snorting cocaine and sexually harassing women. Leaving the party briefly to go to a local convenience store, Baruchel and Rogen witness an extraterrestrial attack during which members of the public are killed or lifted into the skies in beams of light. The friends

make it back to Franco's house amid the carnage (Cera is among those killed) and barricade themselves inside along with Hill, Franco, Craig Robinson and Danny McBride. Supplies dwindle and the actors bicker;

Hill is possessed by the demonic spirits that have caused the apocalypse; McBride ventures out into the fiery streets and is presumed dead, only to be found later ruling over a band of nomad cannibals who eat Franco. After deducing that only the pure of heart can be saved, Baruchel and Rogen are spirited into the heavens. In the afterlife, Baruchel's wish for the pop group Backstreet Boys to perform live comes true.

Tropicália

Brazil/USA/United Kingdom 2012
Director: Marcelo Machado
Certificate 12A 87m 25s

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Marcelo Machado's enjoyable historical documentary *Tropicália* takes a collagist and appropriately colourful approach to excavating the eponymous cultural movement born in Brazil in the 1960s. Comprising music alongside left-leaning theatre and film, *Tropicália* blossomed for a few years before being effectively shut down by the military junta that took power, albeit briefly, at the decade's end. The film focuses largely on the movement's musical element and opens with stirring footage of its two key architects, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, playing live on television. This engaging performance sets the tone for the impressive and clearly well-researched array of archive musical footage that continues throughout.

Machado's decision to construct the film entirely of archive material and interviews (only a handful of captions appear) gives *Tropicália* the feeling of a newly discovered artefact, which is appropriate in the context of the culture's arguably fairly recent mainstream discovery in the West. (A host of compilations began to arrive in the mid-90s, while musical acts such as Beck and Devendra Banhart are vocal fans). Much of the film's propulsive energy initially

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Denise Gomes

Paula Cosenza

Screenplay

Marcelo Machado

Di Moretti

Based on an

original idea by

Vaughn Glover,

Maurice James

Director of

Photography

Eduardo Piagge

Editor

Oswaldo Santana

Art Director

Ricardo Fernandes

Music

Alexandre Kassin

Sound Design/Mix

François Wolf

©[None given]

Production

Companies

Ancine - Agência

Nacional do Cinema,

Brasil - Governo

Federal, Apoio

Institucional da

Prefeitura do

Município de

São Paulo - Lei

10.923/90,

Cinema Paulista

2011 Incentive

Program - Governo

do Estado de São

Paulo Secretaria

da Cultura, Sabesp,

BR Petrobras,

Bahia Governo

- Secretaria do

Turismo Bahiatursa

present a co-

production of Mojo

Pictures, Record

Entretenimento,

Vh1, DLA

in association

with Américas

Film Conservancy,

Revolution

A production of

BossanovaFilms

Selected by

Petrobras Cultural

With the investment

of BNDES

Executive

Producers

Andrew Eaton

Fernando Meirelles

Maurice James

Michael Blaha

Oliver Kwon

Film Extracts

HO (1979)

Câncer (1972)

O Tempo e o

Som (1970)

O Demirugo (1972)

Terra em Franse

(1967)

A Opinião

Pública (1967)

Os Herdeiros (1970)

Hitter IIIº Mundo

(1968)

As Amorosas (1968)

O Desafio (1965)

Bethânia Bem de

Períto (1966)

O Bandido da Luz

Vermelha (1968)

Ver e ouvir (1966)

Meteorango Kid O

Herói Intergalático

(1969)

Chico, Retrato

em Branco e

Preto (1968)

Nosferatu no

Brasil (1970)

Os Mutantes (1970)

Caetano/Gil/

Gal (1969)

In Colour

[1.78:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Mr Bongo

Worldwide Ltd

7,867ft +8 frames

emanates from its hyperactive editing style, all multicoloured tumbling images and snap cuts. However, the constant recourse to zany montage does become slightly enervating, and brings to mind the parodic, lava-lamp aesthetic of the *Austin Powers* series.

One clear result of Machado's authorially hands-off style is that the film itself doesn't seek to establish a concrete explanation for the movement, leaving it instead to the participants. That it was a creative response to the armed forces' coup d'état of 1964 is clear but there are complexities within. Veloso, for example, explains how, despite the prevailing anti-imperialist, leftwing feeling among artistic colleagues, he was reluctant to become too closely aligned with any explicitly political angle because he was suspicious of the often violent nationalistic backlash provoked by taking such positions. Moreover – and more simply – he liked American culture and music, so anti-Americanism (a popular facet of Brazilian leftist thinking of the time) didn't sit well with him.

Veloso's colleague Gil (who enjoyed a stint as Brazil's minister of culture between 2003 and 2008) offers the most eloquent and convincing appraisal of the movement's terminology: "Tropicália was like an island, like some kind of idealised territory, some kind of utopia. Whereas Tropicalism, and the suffix 'ism' makes it clear, was a thing of the moment." Ultimately, Tropicalism seems to be a salient example of what the pop-culture critic Frank Kogan deems a 'Superword' – essentially one whose main purpose is for people to fight over what it should mean. This film is a valuable tool in helping an active viewer decide what to make of it.

Gil and Veloso prove the narrative constants here. In 1968, along with fellow musicians Os Mutantes and Tom Zé, they produced a collective, totemic album, *Tropicália ou Panis et Circensis*, which combined traditional Brazilian rhythms – most notably the folk of the north and northeast – with other rock-based influences like Jimi Hendrix and Chuck Berry. Due to the political content of their work, they were both arrested and imprisoned by the military government in 1969 – a bitter irony for Veloso, given his earlier statements. After two months, they were released and subsequently forced to seek exile in London, where they lived and resumed their musical careers until they were able to return to Brazil in 1972. The film captures these highs and lows with a mixture of revealing interviews and, again, some impressive archive footage.

Yet despite such late drama, some of the film's most intriguing passages occur early on, when the various other disciplines attached to Tropicalism are discussed in more detail. One highlight is an amusing archive interview with Glauber Rocha – the influential Cinema Novo director of films such as *Black God, White Devil* (1964) and *Entranced Earth* (1967) – who appears in a particularly surly mood and declares himself sick to death of talking about the so-called movement. He provides a sharp reminder that artistic categorisation often comes from outside forces, and underlines a particular appeal of this film: its notable absence of theoretical posturing. It just wants to enjoy itself. S

The Wall

Austria/Germany 2011
Director: Julian Roman Pöslér

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

Published in 1963, Marlen Haushofer's novel *The Wall* is something of a cult classic in her native Austria, yet various English-language translations have failed to make much of an impact. One can only hope that Julian Pöslér's adaptation will fare better. Spectacularly shot, thematically rich despite being pared back to cinema's most basic elements (a girl and a gun plus a glorious setting), this is a work of rare elegance in which almost nothing happens and yet which is riveting from start to finish.

The Wall is narrated by a nameless fortysomething Austrian woman whose account of how she reached her current situation unfolds haltingly, in a series of flashbacks. Her hesitant opening – "I'm afraid there will be discrepancies between my report and my experience" – pitches the reader into a shared uncertainty, an incredulity even, about the events that transpire. The woman, we learn, was visiting a cabin in the mountains with friends, who decided to hike to a nearby village. Waking alone the next morning, she set off in search of the couple, only to find herself trapped behind a kind of invisible wall, a giant dome whose transparent surface feels "something like a window pane – invisible, smooth and cool" (rendered by a combination of mime, special effects and a warping, womping audio). No one else seems to exist behind the wall, and the frozen figures glimpsed on the other side suggest that some kind of apocalyptic event has occurred.

Neither novel nor film wastes much time probing the nature of the wall. What matters instead is the manner in which the woman adapts to her new circumstances. We don't see – because she can't remember – how she spent her first mornings, but she swiftly becomes self-sufficient, supplementing the cabin's ample supplies by hunting deer, planting crops, harvesting hay. The latter she uses to feed a pregnant cow, and along with two cats and a dog, Luchs (Lynx, in English), they form a new family group.

The relationship between the woman and these animals – in particular Luchs – is one of the film's key concerns. The woman refers to the cow as "a sister", while Luchs is not only a companion but almost a husband figure. The film draws them together visually: framing them in intimate proximity; lingering on the dark, wary eyes and blank gazes of woman and beast alike. Over time their differences cease to matter, to mean. And yet writing furiously in her diary, clinging to language, the woman recognises herself as "the only creature that didn't belong" among the mountains and forests, reflecting that "a human being can never become an animal. A human can only fall into an abyss, beyond animal." This existential question of what it is to be human, to exist as the only creature subject to moral laws, haunts protagonist and film alike, reaching a bloody conclusion in the story's final hurried minutes.

What gives this film its tremendous power? First, it is in all aspects a magnificent piece of technical work. Produced by the innovative coop99, the film was shot over several seasons by nine of Austria's most accomplished cinematographers, including company

A documentary exploring the late-1960s Brazilian artistic movement known as Tropicália and the struggle its various artists endured to protect their right to express revolutionary thought in the era's political climate. The film is largely made up of archive footage and interviews.



Bare grills: Martina Gedeck

founder Martin Gschlacht (*Lourdes, Revanche*) and ASC award-winner Christian Berger (*The White Ribbon*). The photography is remarkably consistent, and is stunning without being sentimental. A parsimonious use of Bach (played by violinist Julia Fischer) combines with elegant ambient sound design – rustles, rumbles, creaking and cawing – to similar effect. Then there is Martina Gedeck, marvellously self-contained in what is effectively a one-woman show. There is a disarming honesty, and a lack of vanity, about her performance that mirrors the film's broader appeal. Above all, *The Wall* is an act of bearing witness to a woman's struggle, to nature, to everyday life and how it escapes our grasp. It has equality of attention

for things large and small, male and female, 'important' and 'unimportant': when the woman describes how "the forest had put down roots in me", we know what she is talking about.

One might read it as a critique of patriarchy (the large glass-like dome calling to mind Plath's 'The Bell Jar' or more tritely the infamous 'glass ceiling'), of contemporary consumerism or even anthropocentrism. But more than this, in its strange entrapment *The Wall* speaks of life everywhere. Coming across a fox – a shock of rust against even, white snow – the woman decides not to kill it, understanding that it is a symbol of some sort, though she can't explain its significance. The decision, like the film, is instinctive and ineffable. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Bruno Wagner
Rainer Kölmel
Antonin Svoboda
Martin Gschlacht
Wasiliki Bleser
Screenplay
Julian Roman Pölsler
Based on the novel
by Marlen Haushofer

Camera

J.R.P. Altmann
Christian Berger
Markus Fraunholz
Martin Gschlacht
Bernhard Keller
Helmut Pirnat

Hans Selikovsky
Thomas Tröger
Richi Wagner
Editors
Bettina Mazakarini
Natalie Schwager
Thomas Kohler
Production Designers
Renate Schmaderer
Enid Löser
Petra Heim
Hajo Schwarz
Sound
Uwe Haussig
Gregor Kienel
Markus Kathriner

Costume Designer
Ingrid Leibezeder
©coop99
Production Companies
A coop99
filmproduktion
and Starhaus
Filmproduktion
production
In co-production
with BR and Arte
Produced in
association with

ORF (Film/Fernseh-
Abkommen)
A film by Julian
Roman Pölsler
Developed with
the Media Training
Programme eQuinoxe
Germany e.V.
Sponsored by
Österreichisches
Filminstitut,
Eurimages,
Filmfonds Wien,
Land Oberösterreich
Kultur, FFF
Bayern, Deutscher
Filmförderfonds

Cast
Martina Gedeck
woman
Lynx
Luchs the dog
Karl Heinz Hackl
Hugo
Ulrike Beimpold
Luise
Julia Gschritter
Hans-Michael
Rehberg
cottage
Wolfgang
Maria Bauer
man

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles
Distributor
New Wave Films
Austrian/German
theatrical title
Die Wand

Austria, the present. In an isolated cabin, a gaunt woman writes a journal. She recounts how several years ago she was visiting the cabin in the mountains with her friends Hugo and Luise when they disappeared during a hike to a nearby village. When the woman set off to look for them, taking the couple's dog Luchs with her, she ran into an invisible wall.

Gradually the woman realises that she is trapped behind some kind of dome. Exploring the boundary-line, she happens across an elderly couple, frozen in mid-motion on the other side of the wall. She concludes that she is possibly the last person left alive in the countryside – or perhaps the country or even the world.

With Luchs for company, the woman adjusts to her new situation. The cabin is amply stocked with fuel and food, and she learns to hunt deer and plant crops to supplement her diet. She finds a pregnant cow, which provides her with milk and delivers its calf. She is also joined by two cats. Seasons pass. She cares for the animals and finds a kind of peace with nature. She decides to write an account of her experiences. Over winter the pedigree cat dies, unsuited to the harsh conditions. In the summer the woman returns from a walk to find a man attacking the cow. She shoots him but not before he kills the cow and Luchs. Sometime later, the woman finishes her diary, having run out of paper to write on.

The Words

USA 2012

Directors: Brian Klugman, Lee Sternthal
Certificate 15 102m 20s

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

An ostentatiously 'literary' meta-drama about the supposed sacredness of fiction and the near-mystical 'truth' of 'great writing', this bachelors-degree effort comes with a polished battery of seductive textures: Bradley Cooper at his most lip-bitingly earnest, Olivia Wilde in her full traffic-stopping radiance, Jeremy Irons coasting in fourth-gear growling-codger mode, a script that tempts our sympathies and massages our higher longings by daring to place epochal narrative import on the power of a book, or books in general. It might not be difficult for the right kind of book-allergic civilian to be convinced, but sadly *The Words* is an elaborate con, a mendacious, ill-informed fantasy that gets almost absolutely nothing right about the world it essays. You can read its ambitions on every frame: to be taken for a sophisticated investigation into high-culture aesthetics and morality. But its story's every strand, assumption and characterisation is nonsense.

It's not an incidental problem, given that the film is about the force of conventional fiction, and that it aims for trad Hollywood empathy at every turn. First-time directors Brian Klugman and Lee Sternthal, whose major prior credit is a script draft for *Tron: Legacy*, seem never to have actually read a book or met someone who might have written one. The anomalies begin with a framing intro in which not-on-planet-Earth celebrity author Dennis Quaid awes a black-tie audience by reading almost the entirety of his newest novel – which sounds like trite young-adult-level prose. (It's a classic conundrum: how can these scripting hacks write masterful fiction without being masters?) Quaid's tale comprises the film's primary narrative, in which Cooper is a budding, penniless novelist whose fiction is absolutely brilliant but not commercial enough to publish, anywhere, in any form. (We're never allowed to see or hear it, though what Quaid is reading doesn't get one's hopes up.) The despairing hero eventually takes a position in a publishing firm (wearing a SUPERVISOR badge, like he's working at Wal-Mart), until he happens upon a forgotten typewritten manuscript in an antique satchel. This lost tale, about a WWII soldier's loves and losses, is apparently pure narrative magic, so dripping with 'truth' and 'honesty' that whoever reads it is stunned into reverent drooling, a condition of universalised, uncritical worship that has less involvement with the reality of human culture than *Tron: Legacy*. Once Cooper's would-be Hemingway adopts the book as his, he's vaunted as a bestselling genius – in a world where agents talk about 'publishing' their clients while editors agree to 'represent' same.

Iron's showboating appearance as the real, autobiographically fuelled author is intended to bring the ethical transgression to a boil but the story concocted for him is only reheated Hemingway clichés, down to the wartime romance, dead baby and manuscript lost by his wife. Nothing on view isn't counterfeit, aside perhaps from Cooper's watery-eyed confusion. When Wilde's Columbia grad student, lured to Quaid's billionaire condo post-reading, gets him to divulge the book's ending, she angrily cries, "What *really* happened?"

– a cryptic ejaculation that either hints at Quaid having somehow thieved his book from someone, a prospect the film does not pursue, or confirms our sense of how little the screenwriters know about the grown-up world. They are familiar, at least, with the dreamy myths about writers that persist in the non-writing/non-reading public's reptile brain, and these they patronise mercilessly. But, you protest, since the stories-within-stories are all cliché-choked, pretentious and flat-out ignorant, maybe *The Words* is intended as a straight-faced satire on the 'literary fiction' demi-monde, with Quaid's smirking celeb the ultimate puppetmaster, passing off recycled, adolescent bunk as art to a foolish public. If so, despite the fact that the ostensible satiric target would be its only audience, the film could even be cunning. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Michael Benaroya
Tatiana Kelly

Written by

Brian Klugman
Lee Sternthal

Director of Photography

Antonio Calvache

Editor

Leslie Jones

Production Designer

Michèle Laliberté

Music

Marcelo Zarvos

Production Sound Mixer

Simon Poudrette

Costume Designer

Simone Mariano

©The Words Movie, LLC
Production Companies

CBS Films and

Also Known As

Pictures present

in association with

Parlay Films and

Waterfall Media

an Animus Films

and Serena Films

production
A Benaroya Pictures presentation

A Brian Klugman & Lee Sternthal film

Executive Producers

Laura Rister
Cassian Elwes
Lisa Wilson
Bradley Cooper

Cast

Bradley Cooper
Rory Jansen

Jeremy Irons
old man

Dennis Quaid
Clay Hammond

Olivia Wilde
Daniella

Zoe Saldana
Dora Jansen

Ben Barnes
young man

Nora Arnezeder
Celia

Michael McKeon
Nelson Wylie

John Hammah
Richard Ford

J.K. Simmons
Mr Jansen

Ron Rifkin

Timothy Epstein
Zeljko Ivanek
Cutler

Dolby Digital/SDDS
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Buena Vista International (UK)

9,210 ft +0 frames

US, the present. Famous author Clay Hammond reads his newest novel to a rapt black-tie audience; he recounts the story of Rory Jansen, a would-be author whose fiction, his agent tells him, is artful but uncommercial. Despairing of his craft, Rory happens on an old typewritten manuscript in an antique portfolio and, reading it, finds it brilliant. He types it into his computer, and his wife Dora, thinking it's Rory's, tells him it's great. Rory passes it to an editor under his own name and it's published to great acclaim. Then an old man accosts Rory in the park and tells him that the manuscript is his, lost decades earlier. Rory listens to the man's story, which closely follows the plot of the book – a WWII romance, marriage, parenthood and the traumatic death of a child. Rory is conflicted, drinks, and confesses his ruse to Dora, who instantly loses faith in him. Rory tracks down the old man and tries to make amends, but the old man insists that Rory should suffer the guilt, as he himself suffered years before.

Hammond ends his reading and afterwards takes a beautiful graduate student back to his apartment, where she persuades him to divulge the ending of his story – Rory carries on, and life is fine. The graduate student is repulsed by this, and Hammond's facade of suave confidence collapses.

009 Re:Cyborg

Japan 2012
Director: Kenji Kamiyama

Reviewed by Andrew Osmond

009 Re: Cyborg is a poor film with points of interest as a Japanese animation, and one distinction for animation more generally. This distinction is a technical one: the film was made (at least largely) with CGI but treated to look like a traditionally drawn animation. Consequently, it visually resembles past anime action films such as *Akira* (1988) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) but unlike them was produced in 3D. While Disney has made 3D retrofits of some traditional cartoons (such as 1991's *Beauty and the Beast*), *009 Re: Cyborg* is an interesting reversal of that process – a traditional-looking film created with the dimensionality of computer animation, so that its spectacle is more in tune with modern tastes. The look is a modest success, novel in the opening scenes and palatable throughout (albeit with occasional blurs and stray reflections at the preview screening). It has limitations, though. The 3D buildings and people often feel like models and puppets, and the aesthetic has been already surpassed by Disney's Oscar-winning short *Paperman* (2012), a more graceful reconciliation of 'traditional' animation with 3D.

However, *009 Re: Cyborg* has much bigger problems. One is that its characters, though dating back to the 1960s in Japan, are obscure in Britain. The heroes are a team of cyborgs, more uniform than the motley Avengers or X-Men, though each has particular powers (conjuring fire, slowing down time, etc). They were created by Ishinomori Shotaro, who later devised the live-action *Himitsu sentai Gorenjā* (1975), the ancestor of *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. The cyborgs have little to engage new viewers, and none of the brash humour of their Western counterparts. The female member, Françoise, seems especially retrograde; after a truly exuberant action sequence (in which she freefalls from a helicopter towards an exploding tower), she undresses for the boyish hero, Joe, and thereafter is relegated to support duties. Later, Joe fails to save a city from nuclear destruction, and races out at super-speed to escape the mushroom cloud. On the one hand, this is a bold break from the Hollywood rule that the hero must never fail so devastatingly. Yet the suggestion that we should care about the blank-seeming Joe's survival – more than, for example, the millions



Blank city: 009 Re:Cyborg

presumably dying all around him – is perverse.

009 Re: Cyborg is part of a long strand of anime characterised by SF plots and political and philosophical content that includes *Patlabor: The Movie* (1989) and *Ghost in the Shell*. Both of those films were by Oshii Mamoru; *009 Re: Cyborg* is by Oshii's protégé Kamiyama Kenji, who's usually a more populist director than his teacher. Kamiyama made the TV version of *Ghost in the Shell*, subtitled *Stand Alone Complex* (2002), and the daffily charming TV comedy-thriller anime *Eden of the East* (2009). All these titles come from the same studio, Production I.G.

Here Kamiyama goes for heavy-duty philosophy, but without the poetry that Oshii brings to such subjects. *Cyborg* suggests, in a painfully clumsy group exposition scene, that people might spontaneously become terrorists because of an evolutionary drive (God?) that manifests as religious experience. This drive is triggered by fossilised angels, who may themselves be aliens! All this is an unwieldy mash-up of Bernard Shaw's notion of religion as an 'evolutionary appetite' (which underpinned his 1923 play *Saint Joan*) together with the aliens *ex machina* of 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968) or *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967). Unfortunately, *Cyborg's* tortuously garbled abstractions only deepen the dramatic and narrative chaos amid the violent gun battles, stock B-movie heroics and idiotic dialogue. ☀

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Tomohiko Ishii

Written by

Kenji Kamiyama

Based on the characters created by

Shotaro Ishinomori

Director of Photography

Takahiro Uesono

Editor

Atsuki Sato

Production Designers

Takashi Watabe

Hiroshi Takiguchi

Music

Kemji Kawai

Sound Designer

Tom Myers

Animation Director

Daisuke Suzuki

©009 Re:Cyborg
Production Committee
Production Company

Production I.G.

Executive Producers

Mitsuhisa Ishikawa

Muneyuki Kii

Voice Cast

Mamoru Miyano

009 Joe Shimamura

Daisuke Ono

002 Jet Link

Chiwa Saito

003 François Arnoul

Sakiko Tamagawa

001 Ivan Whisky

Toru Okawa

004 Albert Heinrich

Teruyuki Tanizawa

005 Geronimo Jr

Taro Masuoka

006 Chang Chang

Hiroyuki Yoshino

007 Great Britain

Noriaki Sugiyama

008 Pyunma

Nobuyuki Matsubara

Doctor Gilmore

Dolby Digital/DTS
In Colour

[1.85:1]

Subtitles
Distributor

Anime Ltd

The present. Buildings around the world are destroyed by suicide bombers who speak of a 'Voice' commanding them to restart history. Professor Gilmore summons the '00' cyborgs – nine people with fantastic powers. One estranged member, Jet, does not return; he works for the Americans, whom Gilmore suspects of involvement in the bombing.

Cyborg leader Joe fails to stop the nuclear destruction of Dubai by a US pilot infected with the Voice. The cyborgs speculate that the Voice is an evolutionary imperative, deep in the human mind, which is being triggered by recently unearthed 'angel' skeletons inducing religious experiences. Joe is infected by the Voice but battles to prevent more bombings, arguing that every individual hears the Voice differently. Jet helps him detonate the last missile in space. They find themselves in a world that is seemingly transformed for the better. ☀



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Brolly good fellow: Pierre Etaix in his 1969 film *Le Grand Amour*

BURIED TREASURES

The newly rediscovered films of one-time Tati gag-man Pierre Etaix show him to be a comic master in his own right

PIERRE ETAIX

**RUPTURE/HAPPY ANNIVERSARY/THE SUITOR/
YOYO/AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT YOUR HEALTH/
LE GRAND AMOUR/LAND OF MILK AND HONEY**

France; 1961/62/63/65/66/69/71; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 12/14/84/98/68/87/76 minutes; Features: new video introductions by Pierre Etaix, documentary 'Pierre Etaix, un destin animé' by Odile Etaix, booklet with essay by David Cairns

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

I had the pleasure of briefly meeting the veteran French comedian and director Pierre Etaix at a Ciné Lumière reception for him in 2010. He greeted me by doing a conjurer's trick of making a cigarette appear in his hand, then signed a booklet by sketching a little clown face – the gesture and the scribble apparently the two public trademarks of this rather retiring man.

For decades, Etaix has been largely a rumour among cinephiles – you hesitate to call him a

myth because he seems so self-effacing. But he has been more visible in recent years. He was a doctor in Aki Kaurismäki's *Le Havre* (2011) and had cameos in Otar Iosseliani's last two films, notably in *Gardens in Autumn* (2006), among a crowd of elderly gents having themselves measured for their coffins while still alive.

The latter seems an appropriate image of Etaix's fate, for he, and his career, have in effect been buried alive. His five features were out of circulation for almost 20 years because of a dispute with the distributor. It was only after a petition was launched to free them that they re-emerged, restored by Studio 37, the Fondation Technicolor and the Fondation Groupama Gan. Etaix's films are a total pleasure to discover, and it couldn't be a better time for them to re-emerge. The success of *The Artist* (2011) is only one factor, perhaps a marginal one, in the resurgence of interest in a tradition of French comedy going back to the silent era. But that film will certainly make some viewers more receptive to the grace of Etaix's wit. His humour can be broad, even buffoonish, befitting the cartoonist and clown that he has been at different stages of his career. But at its subtlest it displays an acidity evoked in French by the term *pince-*

sans-rire (literally, 'pinch without laughing'), which suggests something more coolly mordant than the usual translation 'deadpan'.

Born in 1928, Etaix was enlisted by Jacques Tati as a cartoonist and deviser of gags for 1958's *Mon oncle* (the famous poster is based on his design), but the two fell out when Tati demanded the rights to one of Etaix's stage routines. Etaix co-directed two shorts with Jean-Claude Carrière, who would continue to work with him as a writer: *Rupture* (1961), about a man ditched by his girlfriend, is a gentle, slightly laboured succession of sight gags, but Etaix and Carrière move up a gear in the following year's more ambitious *Happy Anniversary* (*Heureux anniversaire*), about a man braving traffic chaos to join his wife for dinner. Paris becomes one huge jam of the sort that suggests no one will ever leave their car again, preempting Godard's *Week End* by five years.

Etaix plays the title character in his first feature *The Suitor* (*Le Soupirant*, 1962), and the film makes the most of his fragile physique. His typical persona is that of a wan dreamer, an overgrown adolescent whose solemn face suggests a cross between Buster Keaton and Charles Aznavour; and given the theme of the search for love, it's

appropriate that Etaix is also a ringer for Charles Denner, star of Truffaut's *The Man Who Loved Women* (1977). Etaix's typical character, in fact, is not an eccentric outsider like Tati's Hulot but – as David Cairns points out in Criterion's booklet – a bourgeois trying to fit in with the world and its demands. That's true even in *Yoyo* (1965) when he's playing both an aristocrat and a clown.

The Suitor is virtually a silent comedy – Etaix uses sound effects almost like onomatopoeic comic-strip captions, more broadly and cartoonishly than Tati does, although like him he also uses dialogue for its purely sonic value. Etaix's characteristic relationship with women is sketched out in this story of a misguided romantic, determined to marry but terrified of the first, overpoweringly exuberant woman who shows an interest in him (a terrific, larger-than-life performance by Laurence Lignères). Shying away from adult relationships he escapes instead into a fantasy passion for a Dietrich-like chanteuse (France Arnell).

Le Grand Amour (1969) extends the themes of *The Suitor*, following them into the adult realm of conjugal disappointment. Here Etaix is a raffish bachelor who marries the wrong woman, or so he thinks (Annie Fratellini, Etaix's real-life wife), then lapses into midlife melancholia, which he confides in voiceover to extremely self-reflexive effect. The sight gags are harnessed to a parody of 1960s French discourse on the trials of love – Etaix's films very often make more or less overt reference to the commonplaces of Sunday-magazine doxa (for example in his 1971 documentary *Land of Milk and Honey*, where he quizzes mystified members of the public on the then modish question of 'eroticism').

In *Le Grand Amour*, protagonist Pierre falls for his much younger secretary Agnès (Nicole Calfan), but it's an oddly asexual desire, more yearning than leering. While there's an undeniably misogynistic streak in the film's humour (notably when directed at gossiping matrons), the joke tends to be on Pierre. A priceless sequence of shots has him rapidly turning into a crusty old man while he bores Agnès over dinner.

As Long As You've Got Your Health (*Tant qu'on a la santé*, 1966) collates four satirical sketches. The opener is a throwaway *exercice de style* in homage to Hammer's Dracula films. In the second episode, a routine about an overcrowded cinema suddenly vaults into inspired surrealism with a skit on the absurd promises of advertising. The title episode, however, is where the film really hits its stride, as Etaix explores an agitated world of universal malfunction, noise, pollution and nervous exhaustion, in which people nevertheless insist on grinning like beatific fools ("Souriez... SOURIEZ!" read the omnipresent signs). In its frenetic brashness, this is Etaix's most American treatment of *le gag*, his critique of modernity recalling not so much Tati's *Playtime* as Jerry Lewis's *The Bellboy*. (Etaix acted for Lewis in the notorious Holocaust folly *The Day the Clown Cried* – another film fated to be unseen.)

But the greatest rediscovery of this box-set is *Yoyo*, a black-and-white comedy made



Upper-class hero: Etaix in *Yoyo*

under the influence of Fellini and the French silent comic Max Linder, whose top-hatted dandy persona Etaix adopts at the start. Set in 1925, the astonishing first section features Etaix as an exquisitely jaded aristocrat, living alone in his own private Versailles. Attended by an army of flunkies, he wearily endures the spectacles laid on for his private pleasure – notably a cadre of flappers doing a manic, mechanical hoochie-coochie.

Yoyo's chateau segment is an astonishing achievement of pure artifice; its composure, its exaggerated use of symmetry and synchronisation, its twisting of comedy into a form of nervous melancholia, are utterly audacious, the poised detachment of the execution also suggesting a model for the visual comedy of Iosseliani's French period. When the Depression hits, the now ruined aristocrat runs off with the woman of his dreams, a circus performer with whom he has previously had a son, a little boy-clown named Yoyo. The boy grows up to be a man, played again by Etaix,

For decades, Etaix has been largely a rumour among cinephiles... He and his career have in effect been buried alive

but the film revolves around a poignant twist. Where the father ran off to the circus, the son born into clowning yearns for the chateau; once renovated, it becomes more a prison than ever. With the advent of TV, Yoyo becomes a successful star; here Etaix rails against the idea of comedy as industry. The film culminates in a variation on the desolate glamour of *La dolce vita* before Yoyo rides off to freedom – on the elephant that haunts the film throughout. (The elephant is the circus's ambassador to the outside world, yet the attractions of the Big Top are only alluded to throughout, making this, bizarrely, a circus film without a circus.)

Yoyo is truly a revelation – an impressively meticulous refinement of the art of visual comedy, which in its witty sophistication includes sight gags about Fellini's *La strada*, Tati's *Jour de fête* and Millet's painting *The Angelus*. It also toys with the possibility of sentiment while skirting sentimentality altogether – some achievement for a film featuring a child clown.

Etaix's final film was a radical departure and one that – like *Yoyo* – received short shrift from French audiences. *Land of Milk and Honey* (*Pays de Cocagne*, 1971) is a wry, roughly edited documentary on France built around a series of vox-pop interviews – although Etaix loads the dice by focusing on some rather confused interviewees, as well as showcasing some truly ropey talent-show singers. The film ostensibly echoes Pasolini's portrait of Italy in his 1965 *Love Meetings*, but its ragged, seemingly ad hoc shape subverts the model of the authoritative social survey. With its images of crowded beaches, cut-price holidaymaking and drab modern architecture, Etaix's view of France is so deglamorised that it rivals some of 70s Britain's anti-celebrations of its own shoddiness.

Land of Milk and Honey is an anomaly among Etaix's films but it exemplifies his spirit of observation, which, as Carrière puts it, focuses on banal situations, the better to cultivate "comic perversion". A very benign perversion in Etaix's case, but no less incisive for all that, and in his finest moments, formally nothing less than sublime. ☀



As Long As You've Got Your Health



Laurence Lignères co-stars in *The Suitor*

New releases

FILMS BY MARIO BAVA

BLACK SABBATH

Italy 1964; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 96 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1 Features: European and AIP versions of the film, Tim Lucas audio commentary, Alan Jones introduction, trailers, booklet

BARON BLOOD

Italy 1972; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 88 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1 Features: three audio versions, Tim Lucas audio commentary, Alan Jones introduction, trailers, booklet

Reviewed by James Blackford

Following on from outstanding recent editions of *Black Sunday* and *Lisa and the Devil*, two more gothic chillers from Mario Bava now come to Blu-ray: the portmanteau film *Black Sabbath* (*I tre volti della paura*, 1963) and Bava's gruesome return to gothic terrain, *Baron Blood* (*Gli orrori del castello di Norimberga*, 1972).

Bookended by lighthearted prologue and epilogue to-camera pieces by Boris Karloff, *Black Sabbath* – Bava's second horror film – comprises three very distinct stories: a prototype *giallo* thriller called 'The Telephone', which sees Michèle Mercier tormented by an unseen caller; a vampiric tale set in 19th-century Russia called the 'The Wurdulak', which stars Karloff; and the Victorian-set exercise-in-terror 'The Drop of Water', starring Jacqueline Pierreux as a nurse who unwiseley steals a ring from the corpse of a recently deceased spiritualist. *Black Sabbath* is a pure-cinema horror work, with the skeletal narratives of the anthology format allowing Bava to max out on style and atmosphere, creating flamboyantly colourful, deliciously decorative horrorscapes through which his prowling camera tracks doomed characters.

Baron Blood, Bava's return to gothic after several late-1960s excursions into other genres, is an Austrian-set story which sees the brutal Baron Otto von Kleist (whose ominous castle, replete with torture chambers, is being turned into a luxury hotel) revived from the dead through the reading of an ancient incantation. Made at a time when gothic horror was rather passé, *Baron Blood* represents an attempt to reboot the genre with contemporary flourishes (psychedelic rock, youthful characters and graphic gore). Though hampered by a plodding pace and schlocky performances (especially from Joseph Cotten as the reincarnation of the baron), *Baron Blood* is enlivened by several set pieces that restage moments from Bava's superior earlier gothic films – the baron clawing himself out of his muddy grave and a grisly death-by-spikes-to-the-face scene are both references to 1960's *Black Sunday*. The film's palette is muted compared with Bava's hallucinatory earlier works, but both the camerawork and the lighting of the castle's shadowy dungeons are masterful.

Discs: The amazingly consummate new Blu-ray editions from Arrow Video present both films in their original Bava-approved cuts and in the American International Pictures-supervised US-release versions which were re-edited, rescored (by Les Baxter) and toned down. Extras include extremely informative audio commentaries from Bava authority Tim Lucas plus booklets with essays and interviews.

FILMS BY TINTO BRASS

THE KEY/ALL LADIES DO IT

Italy 1983/92; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 111/97 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1; Features: trailers, booklets

Reviewed by David Thompson

Followers of the TV series *Eurotrash* may recall regular encounters with the rotund, cigar-toting Tinto Brass, surrounding himself with fulsome female flesh and spouting such witticisms as "I put two balls and a big cock between the legs of the Italian cinema!" By all accounts Brass's early films revealed a different figure, one who energetically embraced 60s experimentation. The best-known example of this period, the *giallo* thriller *Deadly Sweet* (1967), puts Jean-Louis Trintignant in Swinging London and delights in pop-art references and prankish, Godard-inspired juxtapositions of images and texts. But with the Nazis-in-a-brothel epic *Salon Kitty* (1976), Brass entered the realm of 70s cine-sexual permissiveness, gaining notoriety by demanding his name be removed from Bob Guccione's overblown *Caligula* (1979). Having decided to dedicate himself to tackling sexual themes and assaulting the boundaries of censorship, Brass made *The Key*, and established the template of what was to follow – bouncy Italian comedies featuring plentiful nudity and a libertine ethic.

Based on the 50s novel by Tanizaki Junichiro (previously filmed by Ichikawa Kon as *Odd Obsession*, 1959), Brass's version of *The Key* relocates the action to Mussolini's time and to Venice, where an English professor (Frank Finlay in his fleshy roué mode) seeks a way to enliven his sexual relationship with his modest younger wife (Stefania Sandrelli). Starting a diary to which he assures her she has access, he slyly manoeuvres her into an affair with their prospective son-in-law (Franco Branciaroli). Brass makes no apology for underlining a personal preference (common to the pornography enjoyed by his generation) for frequent displays of stockings and suspenders, wispy pubic hair and above all the female posterior. Sandrelli obliges him in a performance of endearing abandon, and visually the film plays rewarding games with reflections and colours. But the political ambience is weakly conveyed in comparison with Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (1970), with which *The Key* shares its period, Sandrelli and producer Giovanni Bertolucci.

A decade and five films on, *All Ladies Do It* – a loose English-title equivalent to the Italian original, *Così fan tutte*, after the Mozart opera about marital infidelity – shows a marked decline in



Tutte fruity: *All Ladies Do It*

narrative sophistication and wit. Venice is again the setting for rampant adultery, but this time it's mostly a studio-based construct. Unclothing takes place at an accelerated rate, all the women characters are absurdly insatiable, and as an arch seducer Branciaroli (a Brass regular) now looks decidedly seedy. In *The Key*, one shot new to the UK reveals this actor sporting an obviously prosthetic erection. In *All Ladies Do It*, the male characters can hardly keep the pink plastic objects in their trousers. Whether such an obvious 'special effect' enhances the erotic nature of these films or is just another comedic twist on the genre will be strictly down to personal taste. **Discs:** Both films look fine, if too tightly framed, in restored and uncensored high-definition transfers, with now perhaps more female genital detail revealed than the actors bargained for.

CHINA GATE

Samuel Fuller: USA 1957; Olive Films/Region-free Blu-ray; 97 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

Reviewed by David Thompson

Sam Fuller's take on the end of the First Indochina War, made two years before the US began its own initiative in Vietnam, has until now only been occasionally available on cassette, and then not in its full CinemaScope format. Its low reputation besides Fuller's other war films could mainly be put down to its virulently anti-communist stance – Fuller makes no bones about his entrenched view of what we are constantly told is the greatest threat to the Western world, and no communist character is shown here with any degree of ideological passion or personal integrity. On the other hand, Fuller's clear distaste for all forms of racial prejudice is nothing if not boldly stated throughout.

The year is 1954. Operating from a besieged village close to the communist frontline in the north of Vietnam, French forces seek to destroy a nearby hidden arsenal of Russian arms. Their only possible guide is a glamorous mixed-race local known as 'Lucky Legs' (Angie Dickinson in an early lead role), who supplies booze to communist outposts and is a 'close friend' of Major Cham (Lee Van Cleef), a guerrilla leader also of mixed race. Legs is persuaded to take a group of mercenaries to blow up the enemy arms in return for the safe passage of her five-year-old son – who looks entirely Asian – to the US. The emotional conflict of the story lies in her relationship with one of the band, the American Sergeant Brock (Gene Barry), her former husband who abandoned her when he discovered their son was not a pure-blooded American. As she puts it, her son's "cross to bear is his eyes".

The men-on-a-mission endure mines, booby traps, snipers, a gunboat and their own conflicts to accomplish their task, while the enduring love between Legs and Brock is stymied by his refusal to abandon his racism. Among the multinational band, one striking piece of casting is a quietly dignified Nat King Cole in a rare character role, his presence calling on him to deliver a ballad entitled 'China Gate' complete with offscreen orchestra. This incongruous diversion – along with dramatic implausibilities surprising for an experienced soldier like Fuller and visible signs of a limited budget – makes

for an extremely uneven film. But then, as the opening title announces, this is "Sam Fuller's *China Gate*", warts and all, and there is, as ever, an eccentric but energetic conviction in every turn of phrase and movement of the camera.

Disc: A crisp enough transfer in the correct ratio.

FILMS BY DELMER DAVES

JUBAL

USA 1956; Criterion Collection/Region A Blu-ray/
Region 1 DVD; 100 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

3:10 TO YUMA

USA 1957; Criterion Collection/Region A Blu-ray/
Region 1 DVD; 92 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1;
Features: interviews with Elmore Leonard and with
Glenn Ford's son and biographer Peter Ford

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

It will take some doing to convince people that a man with a homely name like 'Delmer' could have been a really great American – and more particularly western – artist. At least the material evidence is becoming more readily available. Only last year, Warner Archives released Daves's final western, 1959's *The Hanging Tree*, 20th Century Fox Cinema Archives exhumed his 1953 *Treasure of the Golden Condor*, while his one-of-a-kind rural noir, 1947's *The Red House*, appeared on Blu-ray from Twilight Time.

Now, two of Daves's three western collaborations with star Glenn Ford appear bearing the Criterion Collection seal. (The third is 1958's *Cowboy*, and one regrets its exclusion.) *3:10 to Yuma*, a psychological duel between a captured bad man (Ford) and the deputised farmer holding him at gunpoint (Van Heflin, hoarse and palpably melting with weariness) already enjoyed something of a rediscovery after James Mangold's 2007 remake. In a DVD extra, Mangold's version is concisely dismissed by Elmore Leonard, on whose pulp story both films are based. Leonard also notes that one of the finest scenes in Daves's film – Ford's practised seduction of barmaid Felicia Farr – didn't originate in his story. This isn't surprising, for of all the American utility genre directors – and Daves must essentially be classed as such – none so revelled in romantic and sexual transports. (Remember, Daves co-wrote Leo McCarey's 1939 *Love Affair*.) The extreme close-ups Daves uses in the saloon pick-up display the luxuriant, inviting sensuality particular to his work, while when outside he has occasion to deploy the soaring boom shots he favoured, much imitated by his acolyte Bertrand Tavernier.

Ford and Farr had previously appeared in *Jubal*, Daves's *ménage à cinq* set in Wyoming's Teton Range, in the middle of "10,000 acres of loneliness". Ford's wanderer Jubal Troop is adopted into the home of coarse, happy, homely rancher Ernest Borgnine. The boss boasts of his high-class wife Mae (Valerie French) as a "Canadian heifer" – he can't talk about women without bringing in the cattleman metaphors – so it's perfectly natural that she gravitates towards Jubal. This spurs tension with top hand Rod Steiger, Mae's former man-on-the-side, who drools lines like "I suppose you needed some wood? If you needed some wood, you used to ask for me" from his obscene, puckered gob.

Depravity abounds but, true to form, Daves allows Jubal passage to safe-haven with Naomi



3:10 to Yuma To see the film looking its best, as it does here, is to get an expanded idea of the expressive possibilities of black-and-white photography

(Farr), a young woman attached to a wagon train of unspecified religious refugees. "Daves is an absolute rarity in cinema," writes critic Kent Jones in his superb liner notes, "an artist of the good." And indeed the quality that shines forth in Daves's films is a belief in ineradicable human decency, an affirmative vision, a booming 'yes' which finds its visual analogue in outdoor photography where the camera seems to draw in deep, rejuvenating draughts of life-giving air.

Discs: It is no exaggeration to say that to see these films looking their best, as they do here, is to get an expanded idea of the expressive possibilities of black-and-white (*3:10 to Yuma*) and Technicolor (*Jubal*) photography.

THE EALING STUDIOS RARITIES COLLECTION VOLUMES 1 & 2

ESCAPE/WEST OF ZANZIBAR/

PENNY PARADISE/CHEER UP

Basil Dean/Harry Watt/Carol Reed/Leo Mittler;
UK 1930-54; Network/Optimum/Region 2
DVD; Certificate PG; 68/92/69/68 minutes;
Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: stills galleries

MIDSHIPMAN EASY/BRIEF ECSTASY/THE BIG BLOCKADE/THE FOUR JUST MEN

Carol Reed/Edmond T. Gréville/Charles Frend/
Walter Forde; UK 1935-42; Network/Optimum/
Region 2 DVD; Certificate PG; 73/67/71/81 minutes;
Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: stills galleries

Reviewed by Mark Duguid

There's Ealing and there's Ealing. The films on these two haphazardly curated volumes (with at least four more to come) fall both sides of the 1938 border that separates Basil Dean's Associated Talking Pictures, which built Britain's first

dedicated sound stages on Ealing Green in 1931, from the production outfit inherited by Michael Balcon and renamed Ealing Studios to match its premises. While Balcon's Ealing won national-treasure status, Dean's also-ran precursor is (just) remembered for George Formby and Gracie Fields.

Network has an obvious investment in eliding marginalised ATP with Balcon's more marketable Ealing, but that doesn't invalidate the exercise: they are the same company, and the two eras have features in common. Balcon retained not just Formby but also key personnel including Basil Dearden (an assistant director at the time), editor Sidney Cole and composer Ernest Irving, and his earliest commissions share traits with Dean's, not least their awkward coupling of upper-crust heroes and progressive causes.

Most awkward of all is Dean's own *Escape* – strictly not 'Ealing' at all, since it was shot at Beaconsfield before the new studios were built. A mildly progressive scenario – sensitive, hunting-averse aristocrat becomes quarry after he accidentally kills a policeman while defending a prostitute – can't disguise the outrageous class logic, by which the hero's flight is abetted by all and sundry because he's 'a gentleman'. Odd pre-echoes of Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (including a surprisingly frumpy cameo from Madeleine Carroll) only emphasise Dean's directorial weaknesses. By contrast, there's real wit and pace in Walter Forde's eve-of-war thriller *The Four Just Men*, one of Balcon's most appealing early films, which deploys Edgar Wallace's upper-class avengers to investigate parliamentary appeasers.

The much later *West of Zanzibar*, sequel to 1951's *Where No Vultures Fly*, is much



SWEET AND LOWDOWN

Yamanaka Sadao's directorial career lasted only six years but had a lasting influence on the filmmakers who followed

THE COMPLETE (EXISTING) FILMS OF SADAO YAMANAKA

TANGE SAZEN: THE MILLION RYO POT/KOCHIYAMA SOSHUN/HUMANITY AND PAPER BALLOONS

Japan 1935/36/37; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region 2 DVD; Certificate PG; 92/81/86 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: film fragments, interview with Tony Rayns, booklet

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

"Though Yamanaka made only a handful of films," wrote the late Donald Richie, "his influence has been great. Without him there would have been perhaps no *Ugetsu*, certainly no *Rashomon*. He was among the first... to see the past in terms of the present and to see it undistorted." Yamanaka's directorial career lasted a mere six years; after directing his final film, *Humanity and Paper Balloons*, in 1937, he was drafted into the army (as punishment, Noël Burch suggests, for his leftwing views) and sent to China, where he died of dysentery, aged 29.

Of the 27 films he directed (or in two cases co-directed) in those six years, only three are known to survive, and this two-disc Masters of Cinema set gives us all three. Eight years ago a single disc of *Humanity* was released in the same series; this time they've added *Tange Sazen: The Million Ryo Pot* (1935) and *Kochiyama Soshun* (1936). We also get a couple of tiny fragments, vigorous swordfight scenes in both cases, from two of Yamanaka's lost films; these snippets were preserved through being included on 9.5mm anthologies intended for home viewing.

On the basis of these three films (all scripted by his friend Mimura Shintaro), Yamanaka's interest lay in the lower depths: the marginalised members of society scraping a precarious living by means ranging from the just-about-honest to the downright criminal. Following the example of his mentor, the director Ito Daisuke, his work fell into the category of *keiko-eiga* ('tendency films') – socially conscious, left-leaning movies, often tempered with humour, that exploited the conventions of the *jidai-geki* (period film) to level indirect criticism at contemporary Japanese society.

For the earliest of the trio, *The Million Ryo Pot*, Yamanaka inherited a pre-existing character: the one-armed, one-eyed ronin (masterless samurai) Sazen Tange. First created in a serial in the *Asahi* newspaper, Sazen (played by Okochi Denjirō) had already featured in two films directed by Ito. Yamanaka softens the ronin's character; he scowls and growls a lot, but underneath he's a big softie who can't resist the winsome appeal of a young orphan and virtually adopts the boy. The film makes extensive use of that old comedy favourite, the refusal/capitulation gag: a shot of someone (usually Sazen) indignantly



Humanity and Paper Balloons

refusing to do something, followed by a quick cut to the character doing just that.

The plot is cheerfully absurd, with more than a touch of René Clair. The impoverished Lord Genzaburo is sent a battered old pot by his affluent elder brother. His shrewish wife dislikes it, so it's sold to a passing pair of scrap dealers. When it transpires that the pot is inscribed with a map giving the location of buried treasure, Genzaburo is sent out to find it. But he prefers to spend time at a local archery parlour – where Sazen also hangs out – flirting with a pretty girl who works there. So even when the pot shows up (the orphan's using it to keep goldfish in), he's in no hurry to reclaim it.

Though *Pot* is not without violence (the boy is orphaned by a murderous attack on his father),

On the basis of these films, Yamanaka's interest lay in the lower depths, the marginalised members of society

the overall tone is lighthearted, even frivolous. It darkens a good deal in *Kochiyama Soshun*. Again we're in the lower reaches of Edo (Tokyo) society, this time among the gamblers, enforcers and petty criminals. The eponymous Kochiyama runs a small-time gambling den above his girlfriend's bar. Kaneko, another ronin, collects protection money for the local crime boss from stallholders – but lets off the pretty saké-seller Onami (Hara Setsuko in an early role). When Onami's scapegrace younger brother steals a samurai's knife, heavies come after him, and he offers to sell his sister into prostitution to get off the hook; Kochiyama and Kaneko join forces to rescue her.

Yamanaka could have taught Godard a lot about jump cuts. He often cuts without warning from one conversation to another, suggesting a degree of moral equivalence between all his characters whatever their motives. Sets are crowded and cluttered, authentically grimy, underlining the enforced intimacy of these shantytown dwellings where open sewers run behind the huts. *Humanity and Paper Balloons*, Yamanaka's swansong, is set in a similar dead-end community and the tone is even darker: it starts with a ronin's suicide and ends with the death of another at the hands of his wife. But even here humour intrudes: a blind man whose pipe is stolen waits for the thief to fit a new stem before snatching it back. And a barber who runs an illegal gambling den, a seemingly sleazy character, attains a perverse nobility when he defies a gang boss. In Yamanaka's world, redemption is sometimes attainable – if only in defeat.

The Masters of Cinema set boasts fine restorations to the original 1.37:1 ratio. Some footage seems to be missing from *Kochiyama Soshun*, though given Yamanaka's cavalier attitude to plot it's hard to be certain. ☀



Lower depths: Yamanaka's Humanity and Paper Balloons is set among a dead-end community

New releases

 the lesser of director Harry Watt's two African adventures, disfigured by white-man's-burden paternalism and crude racial stereotyping that exposes domestic anxieties as the Empire unravelled (a smooth Arab lawyer/anti-colonial activist is exposed as a ruthless racketeer). Shot in Technicolor entirely on location, it has a distant kinship (but not distant enough) with studio-bound Dean-era exotica like the Anna May Wong vehicle *Tiger Bay*. Most significant of the Balcons is *The Big Blockade*, directorial debut of Charles Frend and a key transitional film, marking Ealing's first attempt to bring a documentary sensibility to its wartime propaganda features. A hymn to the naval blockade against Hitler's U-boats, it's a stumbling but entertaining experiment, which Frend would improve on with *The Foreman Went to France* and the much later nautical drama *The Cruel Sea*.

There are better Balcon Ealings slated for later volumes (noir-ish melodrama *Cage of Gold* perhaps the best of them), but that catalogue has been extensively mined already. The most intriguing – and arguably the 'rarest' – of these 'rarities' are largely from the Dean era, and ranking high among them are early films by Carol Reed. There are two here. *Midshipman Easy*, his debut, won applause from Graham Greene for its cinematic energy. A high-seas swashbuckling tale of a brash young naval recruit driven by unorthodox ideals of equality and human rights, it's fast-paced and fluently directed, with confident handling of studio and location, but undermined by an almost unendurably bumptious young Hughie Green. *Penny Paradise* is less surprising, but an easier watch. Set in contemporary Liverpool, it has an escapist pretext – a tugboat skipper picks the pools winners but his lovelorn mate neglects to post the coupon – but faces the Depression with hearty optimism ("Frowning is never good for you," insists one song). Its attempt to make another Gracie Fields out of Betty Driver (later *Coronation Street's* Betty Turpin) takes optimism too far.

Cheer Up, another sunny Depression story, has a pair of down-at-heel songwriters scheming to win funding for their sure-hit musical. There's some inventive dance fantasy – including one routine played out using tabletop miniatures, and another in which begowned reflections of the heroine step out from their mirrors to accompany her – but it suffers in comparison with more charismatic Hollywood contemporaries.

Brief Ecstasy may promise too much with that title, but this love-triangle melodrama is an unexpected highlight, with director Edmond Gréville (better known for the post-war London underworld thriller *Noose*) gamely attempting to drag the prim British romance into proto-noir territory. After an insipid beginning, it threatens to become almost torrid, and even carries a faint erotic charge (for 1930s Britain, that is – this isn't *L'Atalante*). Luminously lit and inventively photographed by future Lean collaborator Ronald Neame, it somehow anticipates both *Brief Encounter* (which Neame co-wrote and co-produced) and *Rebecca*.

There are still two Ealings. Dean was a theatre man who saw an opportunity; Balcon was a film man to his bones. The best of ATP can't match



That Ealing feeling: *Brief Ecstasy*

the best of Ealing, but it can help us see where it came from, and entertain us in the process.

Disc: Transfers are as clean and bright as you could wish for, though the audio track of *Penny Paradise* is coated by a slight warble, most obviously in the songs.

FORBIDDEN HOLLYWOOD VOLUME 7

THE HATCHET MAN/SKYSCRAPER SOULS/EMPLOYEES' ENTRANCE/EX-LADY

William A. Wellman/Edgar Selwyn/Roy Del Ruth/Robert Florey; USA 1932/32/33/33; Warner/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 73/98/75/67 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: trailers

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

The salacious excavation of pre-Code studio programmers continues with this quartet – four perfectly lovely and absurd early talkies notable for their libertine ways and how they contrast with Hollywood's stuffy sensibility for the subsequent three decades. We can't be proud about it, but there's no sense in denying the prurient thrill inherent in so much sexual frankness, bra-lessness, near-nudity and crazy violence where it just shouldn't be – in movies released during the Hoover administration, when our grandparents were hitting their local picture houses every weekend. The Bette Davis vehicle *Ex-Lady*, one of her first starring roles, is typically outré, with a slinky Davis playing an independent career woman eschewing marriage while dating, and sleeping with, ad man Gene Raymond. They try marriage, ruin it, decide to "be lovers again!", and then end up agreeing that matrimony "hurts less", all in a flurry of casual sex and feminist cant.

It pales, in a sense, beside William Wellman's *The Hatchet Man*, an outrageously racist melodrama in which Edward G. Robinson, the unlikeliest Chinese man in the history of movies, rises from Tong assassin in San Francisco's Chinatown to import tycoon, but then finds himself in trouble with the gangs after he lets his young wife (a bewitchingly meta-Asian Loretta Young) run away with a lover and get sold into prostitution. Heads literally roll, opium

burns, and against all odds Robinson's magnetic humanity emerges from the nonsense.

Roy Del Ruth's *Employees' Entrance* explores sexual exploitation with the staff of a large department store, with Young here sleeping her way to employment, while the axe-faced Warren William reminds us what a decisive and powerfully venal character he could cut in his heyday. William also commands Edgar Selwyn's *Skyscraper Souls*, as an investor finagling to gain complete ownership of the 100-storey skyscraper he built, which the film never leaves. But this film, made in the same year as *Grand Hotel*, deftly ropes in the stories of more than half a dozen other characters, including dewy secretary Maureen O'Sullivan, who is stalked and drooled over by every man, and who (in the same year that she – or a body-double – swam nude in *Tarzan the Ape Man*) emerges from one make-out session with distractingly erect nipples. In this intertwined Depression-era web of sexual commerce, there is constant pressure on women to be used by men in order to survive – a cutting thrust that Hollywood, in the fantasies it would make going forward, couldn't approach again for many years.

Discs: Fine transfers of clean archival prints.

FRENCH MASTERWORKS: RUSSIAN EMIGRÉS IN PARIS 1923-1929

LE BRASIER ARDENT/KEAN/FEU MATHIAS

PASCAL/GRIBICHE/LES NOUVEAUX MESSIEURS

Ivan Mosjoukine/Alexandre Volkoff/Marcel L'Herbier/Jacques Feyder/Jacques Feyder; France 1923/24/26/26/29; Flicker Alley/Region 0 NTSC DVD; 110/136/171/112/135 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: essays, deleted footage

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

It's a forgotten piece of film history from the interbellum: the saga of Les Films Albatros, an emblematic production force in the larger phenomenon of Tsarist Russian filmmakers relocating to France after the Bolsheviks gained complete control of their country. Producer Josef Ermolieff, an old associate of Pathé Moscow, was the first to relocate his company in 1920 – to a French filmmaking landscape still trying to rise from the ashes, economic and emotional, of the war – and he spearheaded production among a wealth of busy émigrés until, in 1922, he sold his concern to partners, who reamalgamated the company as Albatros. Centred on the mesmerising presence of star Ivan Mosjoukine, the Albatros catalogue gleefully employed all manner of *au courant* Soviet experimentalism, German expressionism and saliently French cultural zest, and helped to revitalise the French industry at a time when only Abel Gance and Marcel L'Herbier were taking such formal risks and nursing such reckless ambition.

Still, Albatros was for the most part a mainstream production house, catering to genre and revelling in mezzobrow melodrama, and it wasn't long before the expats became thoroughly Gallicised and were hiring the likes of L'Herbier, Jacques Feyder, Jean Epstein and René Clair to helm their movies. (Clair's *The Italian Straw Hat*, not here included but available on its own from Flicker Alley, may be the studio's most famous film.) The history encapsulated in this new Cinémathèque Française



New releases

 restored set begins uncharacteristically with Mosjoukine's *Le Brasier ardent (The Burning Crucible)*, the only film the florid star ever directed, and by far the Albatros library's craziest entry, as well as one of the 1920s' most unfettered explosions of heedless style. Mosjoukine, resembling Franklin Pangborn morphed with a raptor and imbued with cosmic self-regard, plays a dozen or so roles in this psychodrama about a distracted *bourgeoisie* (the lugubrious Nathalie Lissenko, Mosjoukine's wife) with sexually tortured nightmares and the supercool detective hired by her husband to reveal the source of her troubles. With his self-parodying egomania seeping rather fascinatingly into every scene, Mosjoukine tricks out the proceedings with editing hijinks, arch perspectival designs and camera tricks you could swear he stole from Murnau, Eisenstein, Epstein, Kuleshov and Leni, if in fact their imitable films didn't all follow several years after.

L'Herbier's *Feu Mathias Pascal (The Late Mathias Pascal)* is more serious, if also sludgily paced, an epic derived from the novel by Pirandello, in which Mosjoukine plays a man who allows his oppressive family to believe he's dead and thereafter begins a second life with a new identity. However reliant on title cards, the film bustles with visual invention (the crew criss-crosses with the avant garde, from assistant director Alberto Cavalcanti to cameraman Jimmy Berlient to co-star Pierre Batcheff), though Mosjoukine's grandiosity is kept to a low boil. All the same, the star is best used in Alexandre Volkoff's *Kean*, a fancifully romantic (and quixotic, since it's silent) biopic of the 19th-century Shakespearean stage idol Edmund Kean. It is one of the best and most mysterious pictures about the intercourse between theatre and its audience, and easily the funniest film on view. Famous for its hypermontaged saloon sequence, Volkoff's film actually delivers a payload of heartbreak – however preposterous the circumstances might be.

Jacques Feyder's *Gribiche* is at once a more conventional and more recognisably humane drama about a self-sacrificing schoolboy torn between his widowed mother and a rich matron looking to 'recreate' him as a perfect boy. But the same director's *Les Nouveaux Messieurs (The New Gentlemen)* as a neglected comic wonder, lampooning French politics in and around a screwball three-way romance plot, grounded and lightened by Albert Préjean in the lead.

Discs: Beautiful, if sometimes helplessly encountering degraded original elements. The booklet, written by Lenny Borger, is a thorough history lesson, if light on critical appreciation.

THE GREAT GATSBY

Jack Clayton; USA 1974; Paramount Home Entertainment/Region-free Blu-ray; 144 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by Peter Tonguette

The 1974 screen adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* is commonly thought of as 'the Robert Redford/Mia Farrow version', and while the two stars are perfectly creditable as Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan, it is Sam Waterston's Nick Carraway (Daisy's cousin and Gatsby's friend) who is more affecting and memorable. Perhaps that's because director Jack Clayton, like Carraway, is an émigré

in the *luxe* world of East Egg, Long Island, which is a million miles away both from Clayton's Britain and Carraway's Minnesota. Consequently they soak in its details. Watch how Clayton's camera lingers over the manifold wonders on display in Gatsby's mansion: the beaded gowns sashaying in darkness to the Charleston, or the gold-leaved baby grand parked in the living room.

But Clayton is equally alert to the tactile pleasures of Nick's more humble station. Not a braggart like Daisy (who misses her former lover Gatsby's funeral because she is building a new house) or a dreamer like Gatsby (who throws his wanton parties as a way of courting Daisy), Nick is content to spend Saturday night on the porch of his tiny cottage with a steak and a glass of beer (a moment highlighted by Clayton's biographer Neil Sinyard as an example of his wit). Later, after watching so many scenes of Daisy and her oafish husband Tom (Bruce Dern) whiling away the days, it is a relief to see a glimpse of Nick at his stockbroker job – at an actual desk! Doing actual work! With actual typing! Waterston excels, as Woody Allen once said, at portraying "a regular, recognisable human being who is not a cowboy", and Nick's good form comes through so strongly that it rubs off on Gatsby, who is initially presented to us with such mystery that our first few glimpses of him are accompanied by a marvellously foreboding music cue by composer Nelson Riddle. Are scruples catching? Despite his wish to set up house with Daisy, Gatsby seems to have second thoughts about breaking up her marriage when he meets her young daughter (Patsy Kensit). Nick's girlfriend Jordan (Lois Chiles) tells Nick that Daisy won't get a divorce because, as she whispers, she is a "Cath-o-lic" – if only that were her real motivation, rather than ignorance and self-interest. Nick famously decides

that "Gatsby turned out all right at the end," but he wouldn't say the same for the other East Eggers.

Clayton, the director of *Room at the Top* (1959) and *The Innocents* (1961), visualises the story like the master that he was. The shot of Redford – his back to the camera, looking towards Daisy's green light at dusk, clutching his fist in determination – is as iconic as the novel's famous cover illustration, and the camera move revealing the bloodied headlights of Gatsby's yellow car is downright chilling.

Discs: A luminous transfer, no extras.

THE HOUSE IN NIGHTMARE PARK

Peter Sykes; UK 1973; Network DVD/Region 2 DVD;

Certificate PG; 90 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3;

Features: 30-minute music suite of Harry Robinson's score, original theatrical trailer, TV spot, image gallery, original press brochure PDF

Reviewed by Vic Pratt

Whether or not you like Frankie Howerd's particular brand of comedy is a matter of taste; as the great man himself might have said, please yourselves. But even if you're not a fan, *The House in Nightmare Park* – a 1973 attempt to blend Howerd's comedy with gothic chills *Cat and the Canary*-style – remains an intriguing oddity, which aficionados of British horror will surely find fascinating, if not especially funny.

Howerd plays threadbare Edwardian-era thespian Foster Twelvetrees, lured into a spooky mansion by the promise of a booking and then embroiled in a nefarious plot involving hidden treasure, a mad woman in the attic and an assortment of deadly snakes. Uneasily cast here as leading man, Howerd, dispensing wry asides, makes an admirable go of it but looks as if he'd be more comfortable straightforwardly playing the clown. He's propped up by some



Feu Mathias Pascal An epic in which a man allows his oppressive family to believe he's dead and thereafter begins a second life with a new identity

sturdy support from Ray Milland, who, like the rest of the cast, sensibly resists the urge to go too far over the top and enhances some daft material purely through dry delivery with a twinkle in his eye. But Howerd, through no fault of his own, seems a fish out of water. Genial and proficient though he is, he has no audience to bounce off, there are no direct asides to camera, and – apart from an occasional contrived reference to “a nice pair” or, when a woman faints, his outraged assurance that “I was just giving her my Little Nell” – we are mostly robbed of his characteristic innuendo-laden patter.

Yet if the film flops somewhat as a comedy vehicle, it works better as straight horror. It's shot with some verve by Hammer's Peter Sykes, who would appear to be rather more interested in generating thrills than laughter. There's a genuine air of spooky apprehension about some of the visuals, especially an eerie shot of a veiled old lady in black prowling menacingly through the fog with a meat cleaver, and there's an oddly effective sequence that sees most of the cast dressed up as dolls – for no particular reason, admittedly – to do a creepy little dance routine. Meanwhile the doom-laden music – good but absolutely at odds with the idea of a comedy – adds to the atmosphere in this strange collision of genres. Titter ye may not but, if you're interested in British horror or comedy, watch with interest ye will.

Disc: You can watch the film in as-shot 4:3 full frame or as-exhibited 1.75:1. A music-only audio track showcases the ominously effective score.

KNIGHTRIDERS

George A. Romero; USA 1981; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 18; 141 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: audio commentary with George Romero, Tom Savini, John Amplas and Christine Romero, interviews with Ed Harris, Tom Savini and Patricia Tallman, theatrical trailer, TV spots, booklet featuring essay by Brad Stevens, archival interview with Romero and new interview with composer Donald Rubinstein

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Often seen as an oddity in George A. Romero's filmography, this epic-length Arthurian biker movie develops the themes of his *Living Dead* movies. But whereas they deal with the collapse of society and the struggle to find new modes of survival, this imagines a genuine – if not unproblematic – alternative to the cannibal-zombie America of *Dawn of the Dead*.

King Billy (a young, magnetic Ed Harris) is the charismatic, troubled leader of a band of knights who stage motorcycle jousts at renaissance fairs and are the heart of a travelling community that includes musicians, entertainers, mystics and mechanics. Though its rainbow alliance seems clunky 30 years on, the unforced inclusion of gay and lesbian characters and a variety of mixed ethnicities – including a heavily symbolic American Indian knight – is genuinely progressive.

Conflict comes from Morgan (effects man Tom Savini), a knight who would be king and who is inclined to abjure Billy's style of self-flagellating purity in order to pursue fame and fortune (repped by showbiz lawyer Martin Ferrero, essentially creating the role he would play in



Veiled threat: *The House in Nightmare Park*

Jurassic Park). The armoured bike battles are the big draw, with strong stunt work, but between set pieces the film worries at its subject, sometimes with awkward earnestness and often with a streak of magic (Brother Blue, playing Merlin, is a unique presence) and mania that make it by turns mesmerising, profound, tiresome and childish. It's one of those films that make most sense when seen in the context of an auteur's whole oeuvre rather than as a standalone, but it's nevertheless a one-of-a-kind blend of *Excalibur*, *Psychomania*, *Easy Rider* and *Alice's Restaurant*.

Disc: Extras include a lively commentary track with Romero and collaborators, newly shot interviews with Harris, Savini and Patricia Tallman, and one of Arrow's thoughtfully compiled, beautifully designed booklets.

MASAKI KOBAYASHI AGAINST THE SYSTEM

THE THICK-WALLED ROOM/I WILL BUY YOU/BLACK RIVER/THE INHERITANCE

Kobayashi Masaki; Japan 1956/56/56/62; Criterion Eclipse/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 110/112/110/108 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1/1.37:1/1.37:1/2.35:1 (anamorphic where necessary); Features: liner notes

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Although Kobayashi Masaki is best known for the films he made at the turn of the 1960s – *The Human Condition*, *Harakiri* and *Kwaidan* – there are plenty of other back-catalogue plums, and this Eclipse box-set casts valuable light on the time when he first emerged as an individual talent with a particular fondness for stern social criticism. If none of these films is a front-rank masterpiece, their throat-grabbing immediacy amply compensates.

Autumn 1956 saw three Kobayashi films released in quick succession, completely overturning his previous reputation as a soft-centred humanist. He'd actually made *The Thick-Walled Room* three years earlier (his third feature was also an ambitious debut as self-producer), but its distributor Shochiku shelved it after requesting cuts that Kobayashi refused to make. It's easy to understand official unease – while the film reserves most of its ire for the Japanese establishment, it's sharply critical of the only-just-ended US occupation too. Adapted by future literary giant Abe Kobo from diaries and letters by convicted war criminals, the script's central thesis is that while these men may have been technically guilty, those who gave the orders still walk free, often after testifying against former

subordinates. Set mostly in the US-run Sugamo Prison, the film vividly depicts the madness and despair of incarceration. Although Kobayashi's comparative inexperience is betrayed by occasional lurches into melodrama, it's hard to forget moments such as the inmate bartering pornographic drawings of his wife for cigarettes, or a full-blown expressionist hallucination with flowers shrivelling at a social outcast's touch.

I Will Buy You is notionally a baseball film, but there's scarcely any field action except via rapid montages charting the ever-rising market value of college star Goro Kurita (Ooki Minoru) as he's pursued by professional scouts from major-league teams. The scouts have to negotiate with (ie bribe) his coach-cum-minder as well as assorted family members who have contributed far less to Kurita's career but who nonetheless fancy a cut of the proceeds. Kurita's baseball-phobic girlfriend (Kishi Keiko) regards all this as “socially condoned human trafficking”, which is clearly Kobayashi's take too as he charts the process in forensic detail from initial approaches to a final, devastatingly cynical betrayal.

Set largely in a barely upright slum building whose more entrepreneurial inhabitants take full advantage of a nearby US military base, *Black River* is even bleaker, showing the challenge of remaining a decent human being when everyone else favours the dog-eat-dog approach to survival. Nakadai Tatsuya is spellbindingly good as Joe, a gangster, pimp and murderer with more than enough swaggering charisma to explain why Shizuko (Arima Ineko) finds it hard to choose between him and the morally upright but distinctly nerdish Nishida (Wanatabe Fumio).

Made between *The Human Condition* and *Harakiri*, *The Inheritance* returns to *I Will Buy You*'s theme of the infinite corruptibility of personal wealth, this time from the perspective of a cancer-stricken corporate executive's wish to pass an inheritance on to his three illegitimate children, provided they can be tracked down. The Machiavellian shenanigans that follow come as little surprise, although they're offset here by seductively silky Scope compositions and a jazz-inflected Takemitsu Toru score that seem designed to tantalise the audience before repelling them.

Disc: The films are unrestored but generally in very good condition bar a brief bit of tramlining in *I Will Buy You*. Useful context-setting liner notes by Michael Koresky are designed to be read in chronological sequence across the four films.

A MAN VANISHES + IMAMURA SHOHEI DOCUMENTARIES

A MAN VANISHES/IN SEARCH OF THE UNRETURNED SOLDIERS IN MALAYSIA/IN SEARCH OF THE UNRETURNED SOLDIERS IN THAILAND/THE PIRATES OF BUBUAN/OUTLAW-MATSU COMES HOME/KARAYUKI-SAN, THE MAKING OF A PROSTITUTE

Imamura Shohei; Japan 1967/71/71/72/73/75; Icarus Films/Region 1 DVD; 130/45/50/46/48/75 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: booklet essay by Sato Tadao

Reviewed by David Jenkins

The films collected in this box-set present documentary as a creative plunge pool, an adjunct of fiction filmmaking in some respects but also a poetic artform in its



New releases

 own right. In his supplementary notes, critic and scholar Sato Tadao says that the rise of television in Japan during the late 1960s signalled the end of art-cinema funding; this in turn forced various top-tier directors to take urgent stock of new storytelling modes. The medium-length documentary films made by Imamura Shohei between 1967 and 1975 work as examples of the famously fastidious director working through ideas, flexing his investigative journalistic muscles and adopting his camera as a kind of shield with which to gain access to the lower depths. They are rambling, radical, patient, uneasy and urgent, as much auto-critiques on the process of political documentary production and ethics as they are punchy, ad hoc procedurals in their own right. The un-synched sound and freeform approach to narrative – as if we're learning things at the same time as Imamura – also lend these films the mussy poeticism of experimental test footage.

Imamura's reflexive and alarming 1967 feature documentary *A Man Vanishes* was dealt with in these pages when it was released in the UK on the Masters of Cinema imprint (DVDs, \$65, January 2012), so we'll look here at the five supplementary films that have been bundled into this new box-set from Icarus Films. The two-part *In Search of the Unreturned Soldiers* (1971) sees Imamura – always decked out in a white Airtex T-shirt – heading to Malaysia and Thailand to converse with Japanese military defectors who refused to return to their homeland once combat had ceased. This diptych is perhaps more interesting as a showcase for the director's intuitive approach to questioning: his terseness occasionally recalls Claude Lanzmann, though it's telling that he manages to extract his juiciest material in Thailand during a prolonged family booze session. Information is allowed to flow naturally and freely as the camera and tape recorder quietly purr in the background.

The Pirates of Bubuan (1972) is masterful, a film in which Imamura whisks an entire world out of nothing. The dirt poor of the Southern Philippines live in mortal fear of nearby pirates, who apparently impede any and all technological progress. Children play on sandy verges and carry on the generational tribal violence for which Imamura is unable to discover any root or reason. In 46 minutes we're given an entire societal microcosm with all its maddening contradictions and an unseen, vengeful deity. The film works as a perfect addendum to Imamura's 1968 study of island life, *The Profound Desire of the Gods*.

Reversing the cultural displacement focus of the *In Search of...* films, *Outlaw-Matsu Comes Home* from 1973 follows an ageing soldier returning to the Japanese mainland for the first time in nearly 30 years. Again, it's a film about attitudes that have calcified over time to the point where they make little sense – here in relation to the soldier's violent relationship with his estranged brother.

The most nakedly moving film in the set is 1975's almost feature-length *Karayuki-San, the Making of a Prostitute*, in which Imamura hears the tragic confessions of an unflappable 74-year-old Japanese woman who was kidnapped as a teenager, shipped to Singapore and forced into sexual slavery. Without meaning to denigrate the poignancy of the central saga,



Bard behaviour: Laurence Olivier in *Richard III*

it's Imamura himself who is the film's most engaging presence, his uncompromising yet palpably empathetic interview technique suggesting that he was perhaps as formidable a journalist as he was a fiction filmmaker.

Disc: *A Man Vanishes* is presented here in the new restored version, and the high-contrast monochrome is brutally ravishing and somewhat ironic considering the very much non-black-and-white nature of the film. The transfer of the supplements retains the scuzziness of the 16mm shooting stock, which in turn dovetails with the apparently on-the-lam nature of these projects.

RICHARD III

Laurence Olivier; UK 1955; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 158 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: commentary, Laurence Olivier interview, trailers, restoration demonstration, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

By a delicious coincidence, the Blu-ray debut of Laurence Olivier's final Shakespeare film comes not long after the confirmation of the discovery of the corpse of its real-life subject underneath a Leicester car park and the subsequent evidence-backed challenging of some of the more egregious exaggerations of William Shakespeare's nakedly propagandist portrait of a crookbacked blackguard. But while the revisionist Richard III Society might not welcome the film's almost immediate revival, it still works smashingly well as drama.

Olivier's interpretation originated on stage and was already more than a decade old when he gave it the Technicolor and VistaVision treatment. Unlike the film's predecessor *Hamlet* (1948), which turned the soliloquies into introspective voiceover, here Olivier breaks the fourth wall from the start, with Richard openly soliciting the viewer's complicity in his crimes – a seduction tactic that may explain why his performance has survived decades of mimicry of a kind that might have permanently undermined a less robust creation. By the time he woos Claire Bloom's "gentle Lady Anne", we already know what it's like to be on the receiving end.

When a supporting cast includes John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson, it's tempting to fixate on performance, but this also remains one of the more intelligent approaches to screen treatments of Shakespeare, necessarily filleting the text to create a plausible standalone work (there's much more time spent on Richard's serial-killer activities than on the wider historical context) and staging it mostly within a crepuscular

lighting schema with regular splashes of crimson in the costumes and decor that foreshadow the surprisingly graphic bloodletting on Bosworth battlefield at the end. Because Olivier's performance is so iconic, it's easy to forget how deft and subtle he'd become as a cinematic image-maker – Otto Heller's mobile camera is as expressive as anyone passing in front of it.

Disc: Expensively restored by Martin Scorsese's Film Foundation from the original camera negative, this mostly looks and sounds astonishing, revealing noticeably more of the VistaVision frame than previous DVDs and even some 35mm prints. The somewhat pedagogical commentary by Shakespeare scholars Russell Lees and John Wilders is nonetheless packed with useful information, while Amy Taubin's booklet essay offers a less scene-specific critical overview. An episode from the BBC's *Great Acting* series (1966) showcases a lengthy interview with Olivier by his National Theatre colleague Kenneth Tynan that's refreshingly candid on both sides.

VITO

Jeffrey Schwarz; USA 2011; Peccadillo Pictures/Region 2 DVD; Certificate E; 93 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: clips from 'Our Time', interview outtakes

Reviewed by Alex Davidson

Few students of queer theory will be unfamiliar with activist Vito Russo's book *The Celluloid Closet* (1981), a landmark exploration of the portrayal of LGBT characters on the big screen, later adapted into an excellent documentary. Jeffrey Schwarz's informative film details the life of Russo, who realised at an early age that he was gay and became politicised in the aftermath of the 1969 Stonewall riots. He would go on to be a co-founder of the Gay Activists' Alliance (GAA) and a key member of ACT UP, promoting an utterly guilt-free message of gay liberation (as one interviewee notes: "Vito was a slut, and he was proud of it").

The talking heads include famous names (Lily Tomlin, Larry Kramer, Bruce Vilanch), although the most arresting commentary comes from family members, whose frank and touching testimony humanises a man often accredited demigod status. Appropriately, given Russo's integration of film clips in his lectures, Schwarz uses archive footage to depict both the gay liberation movement and the reaction (and lack thereof) to the Aids epidemic. Scenes from the contentious 1973 Gay Pride rally, co-organised by Russo, show the tensions within the gay community – drag queens and lesbian feminists are jeered as they try to speak, before Bette Midler arrives to save the day with song and dance. Schwarz also uses footage from *Our Time*, Russo's TV series on LGBT issues, and a candid interview Russo gave the year before his death in 1990 from Aids-related complications.

Any documentary representing American gay life in this era tends to fall into the cliché of showing gay hedonists partying hard in the 70s and dropping dead in the 80s, but *Vito* avoids this hackneyed narrative, showing the infighting in the gay-lib movement and the empowering rebellion of a community fighting for its life.

Disc: Extras were not available on the check discs, but will include scenes from *Our Time* and interview outtakes.

Television

JOURNEYMAN

Left Coast Productions/20th Century Fox/NBC; USA 2007; Medium Rare Entertainment/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 627 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: audio commentary, 'Flashing Forwards' retrospective documentary, 'The Back Nine' featurette, stills gallery, deleted scenes

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

Kevin McKidd is the appealing lead in a series that, saddled with a premise and general approach owing a little too much to *Quantum Leap* (1989-93), never quite managed to stand out. McKidd is Dan Vasser, who inexplicably starts travelling back within his own timeline, thus messing up his family life in all kinds of ways, not least because in the past he keeps meeting his exotic and long-thought-dead ex-fiancée Livia (the ravishing Moon Bloodgood) who, it turns out, also bounces through time, albeit moving forward rather than back. This wrinkle doesn't exactly mollify his otherwise amazingly forbearing wife Katie (Gretchen Egolf), who also happens to be his brother Jack's ex-girlfriend. Thankfully a nice line in humour softens the soapier entanglements as Katie comes to terms with her husband's sudden bouts of extemporaneous unavailability, while Jack (the excellent Reed Diamond, an actor who has, as he says in the extras, "perfected the art of playing the likeable dick") tries to decide whether Dan has relapsed into his old gambling addiction or is just cracking up.

Despite some half-hearted attempts at a scientific rationale, with technobabble references to "spontaneous symmetry breaking" and "perturbations in the local dark-energy density", the show mostly succeeds by focusing on domestic complications and sentiment (according to the extras, this was meant to make the programme more appealing to women, who also make up the majority of the writing and directing staff). Eventually some hard SF does emerge, most successfully in a niftily plotted time-paradox two-part about Dan's attempts to change the destiny of a kidnapper and possible child molester, paving the way for a well-judged finale that leaves things open-ended rather than hanging.

Disc: Spotless transfers and a bounty of extras, including an unusually thorough documentary on the making of the show and a detailed 20-minute consideration of where things might have gone had *Journeyman* not been cancelled.

THE LIVER BIRDS: COLLECTION 1

BBC; UK 1971; Acorn Media/Region 2 DVD; 371 minutes; Certificate PG; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: Polly Walker and Nerys Hughes interview; text biographies

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

When the traditional multi-camera studio sitcom is occasionally disinterred – recent forays including Ben Elton's *The Wright Way* and the Ian McKellen/Derek Jacobi vehicle *Vicious* – it mainly serves as a salutary reminder of just how pervasive and rigid this once ubiquitous format used to be. In the 70s even the iconoclastic Monty Python mavens contributed scripts for LWT's smutty *Doctor in the House/at Large* sitcoms, while the *Fawlty Towers* triumph was achieved without actually laying a glove on the genre's essential trappings. This is equally true of *The Liver Birds*, where it is certainly hard to discern the influence of Eric Idle on the



The Liver Birds

The chirrupy presence of Polly James and Nerys Hughes helps to convey some of the original freshness amid standard plot contortions

half-dozen episodes by writer-creators Carla Lane and Myra Taylor that he script-edited.

As the show's debut outing (co-starring Pauline Collins) has been junked, this collection begins with the following season, with Polly James and Nerys Hughes the eponymous Liverpudlian flatmates. Bright, broad and breezy, their chirrupy presence helps to convey some of the original freshness amid standard plot contortions involving pets, boyfriends, work and family, coasting on a steady wave of lively chat (including a discussion on how many of the Magnificent Seven were actually "one of them"). That its female authorship and the 'liberated' status of the 'birds' made this long-running distaff take on the sitcom mould-breaking tells its own story – one well worth pondering when the next backward-looking comedy tries to turn back the clock.

Disc: The main extra is a cheery new half-hour interview with James and Hughes.

VEEP – SEASON 1

Dundee/HBO; USA 2012; Warner Home Video/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 15; 308 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: audio commentaries, deleted scenes, 'making of', anti-obesity Public Service Announcement, previews

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

Having already debunked the 'special relationship' with *In the Loop* (2009), the

US-based movie spinoff from his successful BBC television comedy *The Thick of It*, Armando Iannucci keeps the squirm factor turned up to 11 in *Veep*, a Beltway transplantation of the original show which retains both the handheld, behind-the-scenes, quasi-documentary aesthetic and the splenetic invective. We watch in gleeful horror as newly installed, perpetually sidelined vice president Selina Meyer (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) careens through a morass of PR cock-ups which she then blames on her hapless staff (at one point she crushes someone's suggestion with a Malcolm Tucker variant: "It's like trying to use a fucking croissant as a dildo – it doesn't do the job and it makes a fucking mess").

Caustically showcasing a bipartisan system so Balkanised that even yoghurt flavours and hurricane names are politicised, the show is at its piquant best anatomising second-division players (the Pres remains studiously offscreen) floundering in a system that rewards only winners. Funny, bracing and cringe-worthy viewing.

Disc: All HD specs are well up to par. The main extras are the multiple audio commentaries (12 across eight episodes), the most substantial being those featuring Iannucci, Louis-Dreyfus and the writers. ☀

Books



What lies beneath: Peter Cushing's memoirs reveal surprisingly little of the man

A GENTLEMANLY WAY WITH EVIL

PETER CUSHING: THE COMPLETE MEMOIRS

Introduction by Jonathan Rigby, Signum Books, 336pp, £19.99, ISBN 9780956653482

PETER CUSHING: A LIFE IN FILM

By David Miller, Titan Books, 192pp, £18.99, ISBN 9781781162743

WHITSTABLE

By Stephen Volk, Spectral Press, 116pp, £12.50, ISBN 9780957392729

Reviewed by Kim Newman

A flurry of books have appeared to commemorate the centenary of Peter Cushing. For generations who grew up with his work, he remains among Britain's most beloved actors, thanks to BBC television stardom in the 1950s (memorably as Winston Smith in Rudolph Cartier and Nigel Kneale's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*), his authoritative presence in the Hammer (and Amicus and Tigon) horror films

of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, his relaxed television guest appearances on *The Morecambe and Wise Show* (in an attenuated running gag about not getting paid), genial incarnations of Doctor Who in the cinema and Sherlock Holmes on television (less neurotic than contemporary takes on these characters), and his significant yet oddly not-career-changing appearance as a villain in *Star Wars* (arguably, the villain – Darth Vader seems to be his junior partner). In an introduction to a new edition of his memoirs, Jonathan Rigby astutely notes that Cushing somehow appeared in the most successful film of all time and yet it led to nothing much.

The Complete Memoirs collects two volumes that Cushing wrote in his retirement – *An Autobiography* (1986) and *Past Forgetting: Memoirs of the Hammer Years* (1988) – along with an early draft of the autobiography prepared for magazine serialisation in 1955. David Miller's *A Life in Film* is an appreciative and useful account of Cushing's screen career, which the subject was either too modest to go into or not interested enough in to explore. *Past Forgetting* was written in response to criticism that *An Autobiography* rather skimped on the work its author was best known for, as he admits in a disarmingly apologetic note, but is

still light on anything beside fond reminiscence of co-workers (Cushing was known for his meticulous – and scene-stealing – business with props, but he doesn't mention it himself). It's a shame no one has yet attempted a full biography, for the memoirs – while selectively frank about a nervous breakdown suffered in the early 1950s and tactful in owning up to non-specific indiscretions with actresses – are mostly charming anecdote. Cushing offers lively comic accounts of his boyhood, a spell as an inept junior civil servant, lowly duties in provincial repertory theatre and, in the book's best section, a late-1930s spell in Hollywood. (One revelation: he was on the set of *High Sierra* because he was friendly with British ex-pat star Ida Lupino.) Cushing rose rapidly from bit-parts to a solid supporting role in the Carole Lombard movie *Vigil in the Night* (1940) that might have led to an American career but his time in Los Angeles was curtailed for vaguely patriotic reasons, though he was too frail to enlist.

Cushing structured his autobiographies around his marriage to Helen Beck, an actress who gave up her career and devoted herself to boosting her not-terribly-ambitious husband; at one point, she wrote to every producer listed in the *Radio Times* mentioning that he was available for television

work. After Helen's death in 1971, Cushing was so visibly stricken that the script for *Dracula AD 1972* had to be rewritten to make Stephanie Beacham's character Van Helsing's granddaughter rather than his daughter. In a manner genuinely revealing of his gentlemanly personality, Cushing is reverent and tactful in writing about his marriage and frankly a bit odd (and un-English) in expressing numbing, naked grief.

In the absence of a biography, Stephen Volk – screenwriter of *Gothic* and *Ghostwatch* – has written *Whistable*, a novella that imagines a newly bereaved Cushing drawn into a messy situation by a young fan he meets at the seaside in the Kent town (where the actor was a famous resident) who takes Cushing for Van Helsing and claims that his stepfather is a vampire. Though a speculative portrait, Volk's Cushing is convincing; he draws on the memoirs but adds in anger, frustration and serious commitment to fighting evil that was a part of Cushing's screen character, often probing for raw feelings Cushing was too well mannered to express.

Though chiefly studying Cushing's work, Miller (revising a book first published as *The Peter Cushing Companion*) touches on aspects

Cushing is reverent and tactful in writing about his marriage and a bit odd, and un-English, in expressing numbing, naked grief

of the life and career entirely avoided in the memoirs. Cushing politely doesn't dwell on his sometimes thorny relationship with Hammer Films. In the late 1950s and early 60s, he made script demands, seems to have initiated projects (the undervalued *Cash on Demand*) and appeared in supporting roles in big international movies for other studios (*Alexander the Great*, *John Paul Jones*) while starring for Hammer in the likes of *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958) and *The Mummy* (1959). He even turned down a vehicle tailored to him, letting Anton Diffring take the star role in *The Man Who Could Cheat Death*, and brought his own writers in to add wit to Jimmy Sangster's sketchy scripts. Well before Helen's death, he seems to have decided to settle for what was on offer – meekly returning to the crypts frequent co-star Christopher Lee struggled to get away from. Never unprofessional, he seems less engaged in his post-1963 work (his *Doctor Who*, a fussy comedy professor, is a rare play-it-safe performance) and was greatly disappointed in his BBC *Sherlock Holmes* series in 1968. In the memoirs, he singles out post-1971 performances as grieving widowers – in *Tales from the Crypt* (1972) and *The Ghoul* (1974) – so he can further write about Helen but neglects to mention his fine work in *Horror Express* (1972), a film in which he and Lee came close to representing their real characters and relationship.

To Peter Cushing, the most interesting thing about his life was his marriage. To David Miller – and, I suspect, the rest of us – it was his work. It takes a fiction writer, Stephen Volk, to get closest to who he was and what he meant. **S**

NEW QUEER CINEMA: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

By B. Ruby Rich, Duke University Press, 360pp, £18.99, ISBN 9780822354284

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

Most works of criticism or theory arrive after the event, histories of moments or movements past. B. Ruby Rich's *New Queer Cinema* is not only a series of reports from the field (or at least, the film-festival bar), but can claim to have changed the field through those reports. Rather than the observer effect, one could call it the *Sight & Sound* effect: Rich notes at the end of her definitional essay 'The New Queer Cinema' that the article title, and thus movement name, was coined in collaboration with the magazine's then editor Philip Dodd when he reprinted it from *The Village Voice*. She also reveals, in the new endnote, that "In Chicago a young lesbian couple named Rose Troche and Guinevere Turner would read this very article in *Sight and Sound* in the fall of 1992 and decide to contact Christine Vachon about a little film they had started working on together: *Go Fish*."

Packed into that endnote is Rich's model of cinema, and New Queer Cinema specifically, as a community where critical advocacy, production savvy and filmmaker moxie coincide via shared media space and work together to defy expectations. Over 300 pages Rich charts just how defiant of expectations NQC proved: from the first-ever queer filmmakers' panel at a mainstream festival at Sundance 1992 to Apichatpong Weerasethakul winning the Palme d'Or for *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* two decades later, queer cinema has not only survived oppression and harassment, the AIDS epidemic, moral panics and mainstream appropriation, but has changed cinematic and popular culture itself, as Rich explores in her chapter on *Brokeback Mountain*. Drawing on a festival report about the movie for *The Guardian* and a later reflection on popular-cultural and

political responses to the film for *Film Quarterly*, bridged by a new section researching gay life histories from *Brokeback's* era, 'Ang Lee's Lonesome Cowboys' is a paradigmatically Rich (and rich) piece. It starts with the excitement generated by the secular rite of the film festival, watching the audience as much as the film while cleverly framing the event with a deep stock of historical references. Political awareness and activist history follow, opening into a critical look at the larger cultural moment before Rich returns to re-read the film through the optic of audience reaction and reflection.

"The director's cut is not the only standard," observes Rich at the end of her introduction. "The audience cut has long been my favorite version of a movie, shaped by a call-and-response pattern of group acceptance and disavowal... Authority is never the sole prerogative of the writer who writes the history. All views are partial and ephemeral. Can the shape of the movement ever entirely be known, even by those credited with launching it?" Rich's anti-authoritarian manifesto for the critic as (just a) member of the audience is a crucially, and typically, generous reflection, as *NQC* balances its disavowal of singular and stable histories with the importance of being a gathering of and for the record.

The vast majority of material here has been previously published but it is expanded, footnoted and indexed. Essays on Latin American and French LGBTQ cinema valuably take their place alongside write-ups of more familiar films, from *Edward II* and *The Watermelon Woman* to *Tarnation* and *Itty Bitty Titty Committee*. It's the opening chapter and conclusion that turn the collection into a book, with the conclusion a present-yet-prescient survey that encompasses the shift to gallery installations, the new trans cinema, digital developments and a resurgence of innovative fiction and documentary on the festival circuit that suggests "we aren't after the fact at all... We are surely and absolutely... pre-."

Thus Rich closes the book with an invocation of the same energy and urgency she identified in the opening chapter. 'Before the Beginning' offers a dynamic pre-history of US lesbian and gay cinema, with a particular emphasis on the queerness of New York's experimental film culture from Kenneth Anger to Lizzie Borden, whose energy then spreads to figures associated with NQC such as Todd Haynes, John Greyson and Gregg Bordowitz, supercharged by wrangles with Reagan-era conservatism for both arts and AIDS-research funding. The chapter closes with Ira Sachs's elegiac *Last Address* (2010), the relation between whose impossibly moving effect and radical economy of means (exteriors of buildings, with names superimposed, marking the last addresses of activists and artists who died of AIDS) serve as a microcosm for the films Rich champions. It "does the kind of work to which I aspire," she writes, "remembering and carrying on, holding the door open all the while to new neighbors." Whether you're a denizen, a habitué or a newcomer to queer cinema, Rich's writing will make you feel welcome, and offer something to discover. **S**



New neighbours: *Go Fish*

NICE GUYS DON'T WORK IN HOLLYWOOD:

The Adventures of an Aesthete in the Movie Business

By Curtis Harrington. Drag City Incorporated, 272pp, £14.99, ISBN 9781937112071

Reviewed by Jane Giles

Which film critic first published in *Sight & Sound* in 1949 was also an avant-garde contemporary of Kenneth Anger, worked in the studio system, gave Dennis Hopper his first starring role, Gloria Swanson her last, and ended up making episodes of *Dynasty*? Curtis Harrington, of course. The director most likely to illicit a response of "Who?"

Written in 2002, Harrington's memoirs fill in the gaps. Born in California in 1926, he was a film fan from an early age, drawn to both studio horror and the towering greats of silent cinema through his discovery in the local library of Paul Rotha's seminal book *The Film Til Now*. Towards the end of the war, Harrington's intended career as a dentist took a sharp left turn into filmmaking when he went to study at Occidental College, receiving lectures from the likes of Loretta Young, Mae West and Josef von Sternberg.

Harrington's gossipy life story jumps from California to New York, Paris to London and back to LA, dropping a lot of names en route. He hangs out with Gore Vidal, James Baldwin, Anaïs Nin and Christopher Isherwood (a recurring figure in the book and Harrington's nemesis, he once punched our hero in the face at a party); James Whale (whose 1932 film *The Old Dark House* was rediscovered by Harrington), Jean Cocteau, Marlon Brando and Stanley Kubrick (in tears after the disaster of his first feature *Fear and Desire*), Roman Polanski and Hercules Belleville. Harrington screens his lyrical avant-garde short films *Fragment of Seeking* (1946), *Picnic* (1948) and *On the Edge* (1949) to everyone he meets, and appears as Cesare the somnambulist from *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* in Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954) alongside occult royalty Samson De Brier and Marjorie Cameron (widow of Jack Parsons, and the subject of Harrington's 1956 short *The Wormwood Star*). Cameron would also appear in Harrington's first feature *Night Tide* (1961), a mesmerising love story in which Dennis Hopper plays a lonely sailor falling for a carnival mermaid. Hopper also appears in one of the book's juicier stories when, drunk and stoned, he loudly recites his own poetry at a party given by Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward, until his mild-mannered hostess can take no more and batters him senseless with an antique bed warmer.

Harrington's career was bracketed by Gothic adaptations, his first film being an unfinished 8mm home-movie version of Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher* (1942) while his last was *Usher* (2002). He slipped into the studio system in 1955, assisting producer Jerry Wald at Columbia, and in the hiatus after the independently produced *Night Tide* he experimented with a pair of science-fiction movies that re-versioned Soviet films: *Voyage to the Prehistoric Planet* (1965), based on footage from Pavel Klushantsev's *Planet of the Storms*, and *Queen of Blood* (1966), for producers Roger Corman and Samuel Z. Arkoff. Harrington loved tragedy and abhorred sentimentality, casting grandes dames of old Hollywood in campy horror movies



Fan turned filmmaker: Harrington with Shelley Winters, star of *Whoever Slew Auntie Roo?*

dames of old Hollywood in his campy horror movies. *How Awful About Allan* (1970), made for TV with Anthony Perkins, and *What's the Matter with Helen?* (1971) were both written by Henry Farrell (*What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*) while *Whoever Slew Auntie Roo?* (1971) starred Shelley Winters, Ralph Richardson, Michael Gothard, Lionel Jeffries and the young Mark Lester in a Grimm fairytale written by Jimmy Sangster.

Harrington's knack for startling film titles included TV movies based on Robert Bloch's stories *The Cat Creature* (1973) and *The Dead Don't Die* (1975), *Devil Dog: The Hound of Hell* (1978, made for TV), *The Killing Kind* (1973, made for TV) and *Killer Bees* (1974, made for TV), which starred Gloria Swanson with Joel Schumacher on costume-design duties. Harrington abandoned *Ruby* (1977) to the filmography of Alan Smithee, but claimed credit for *Mata Hari* (1985) starring Sylvia Kristel who, he writes, "simply could not act". Harrington's decade-long "descent into the hell of episodic television" began in the 1970s, directing primetime entertainment such as *Wonder Woman*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The Colbys* and *Charlie's Angels*. Keen on astrology,

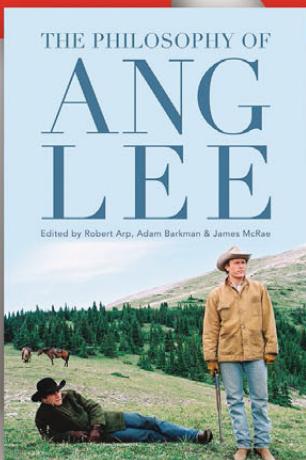
Harrington loved tragedy and abhorred sentimentality, casting grandes dames of old Hollywood in campy horror movies

Harrington points out that cinema is ruled by Neptune, the planet of illusion, while television falls under the influence of Uranus.

When Harrington died in 2007, actor Jack Larson (Jimmy Olson in the 1950s *Superman* TV series) was scheduled to be the only speaker at his service at the Forever Hollywood Cemetery next to Paramount Studios. Larson had barely started when he was interrupted by Kenneth Anger, who'd arrived with a film camera in tow, kissed Harrington's embalmed corpse and taken his place in the front row. Larson persevered as Anger provided a running commentary that covered everything from homunculi to men with tails, Dr Kinsey to Howard Hughes's "syphilis of the brain". Across from Anger's seat was a huge floral bouquet with a card that read: "For my old pal Kurtiz from his old rival Kenneth Anger". Harrington's memoir plays down his interest in the occult and any rivalry with Anger and, despite occasional swipes at Patty Duke for being "short, dwarfish, unsexy and unattractive" or at Michael Gothard for peevishly refusing to get his hair cut and being "a pain in the ass", he emerges with his reputation for being one of the nicest people in the demented Babylon of Hollywood more or less intact.

This edition includes Harrington's unpublished short story *The Secrets of the Sea* (on which *Night Tide* was based) and *An Index to the Films of Josef von Sternberg*, the 1949 article he wrote for *Sight & Sound*.

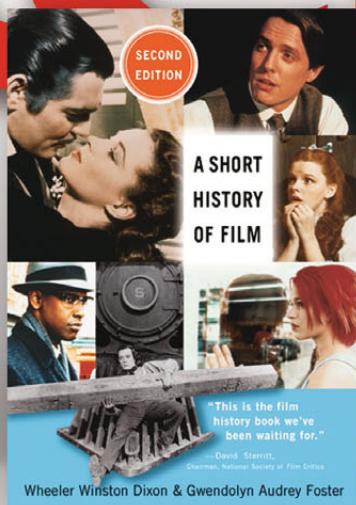
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THE PHILOSOPHY OF ANG LEE

Edited by Robert Arp, Adam Barkman & James McRae, The University Press of Kentucky, 312pp, hardback, illustrated, £36.50, ISBN 9780813141664
Ang Lee (b. 1954) has emerged as one of cinema's most versatile, critically acclaimed and popular directors. Known for his ability to transcend cultural and stylistic boundaries, Lee has built a diverse oeuvre that includes films about culture clashes and globalisation (*The Wedding Banquet*, 1993, and *Eat Drink Man Woman*, 1994), a period drama (*Sense and Sensibility*, 1995), a martial-arts epic (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, 2000), a comic-book action movie (*Hulk*, 2003), an American western (*Brokeback Mountain*, 2005) and the critically acclaimed 3D spectacular *Life of Pi* (2012). *The Philosophy of Ang Lee* draws from both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions to examine the director's works.

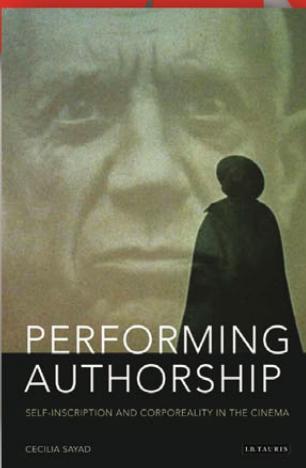
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A SHORT HISTORY OF FILM: 2ND EDITION

By Wheeler Winston Dixon & Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, Rutgers University Press, 496pp, paperback, illustrated, £27.50, ISBN 9780813560557
This updated edition presents new and amended coverage of film in general as well as the final works and birth/death dates of notable directors. Its expanded focus on key films brings the new edition firmly into the digital era and chronicles the death of film as a production medium. With more than 250 rare colour and black-and-white stills, the book is unmatched in its panoramic view of the medium as it is practised around the world as well as its sense of cinema's sweep in the 20th and early 21st centuries. This is the best one-stop source for the history of world film available for students, teachers and general audiences alike.

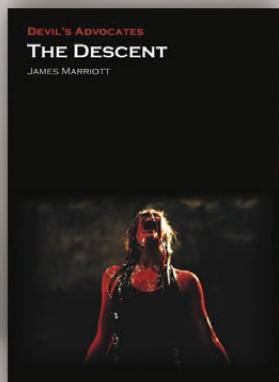
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PERFORMING AUTHORSHIP: SELF-INSCRIPTION AND CORPOREALITY IN THE CINEMA

By Cecilia Sayad, I.B. Tauris, 288pp, paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781780760063
Performing Authorship offers a refreshingly new take on the cinematic auteur, proposing that the challenges that once accelerated this figure's critical demise should instead pump new life into it. This book is about the drama of creative processes in essay, documentary and fiction films, with particular emphasis on the effects that the filmmaker's body exerts on our sense of an authorial presence. It is an illuminating analysis of films by Jean-Luc Godard, Woody Allen, Agnès Varda, Orson Welles, Jean Rouch, Eduardo Coutinho and Sarah Turner that shows directors shifting between opposite movements towards exposure and masking, oscillating between the assertion and divestiture of their authorial control.

www.ibtauris.com



THE DESCENT

By James Marriott, Auteur/Devil's Advocates, 118pp, paperback, £9.99, ISBN 9781906733711

The Descent is arguably the best of the crop of mid-2000s horror entries that returned to the genre a verve and intensity it hadn't seen since its 1970s heyday and were popular both commercially and critically. In his contribution to the Devil's Advocates series James Marriott, co-author of *Horror: 333 Films to Scare You to Death*, conducts an in-depth yet accessible investigation into the hidden narratives found in the film, with scores of references to its antecedents, and a highly original discussion of its atavistic allure. Marriott's highly original reading exposes themes that have until now remained generally underexplored in the genre.

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READERS' LETTERS

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TRUE BRITTEN

In Adam Howard's dismissal of my film *Benjamin Britten: Peace and Conflict* (Reviews, S&S, June) he mentions the composer "performing at concentration camps in Auschwitz". It is explicit in the narration and Holocaust survivor Anita Lasker Wallfisch's moving testimony that she saw Britten and Menuhin perform at Belsen, after the liberation in 1945. This major inaccuracy negates my research and is insulting to one of the last surviving members of the Auschwitz women's orchestra.

Mr Howard also attests that "most of the film consists of photographs and letters appearing on screen, accompanied by a voiceover that at its worst resembles a PowerPoint presentation". Leaving aside the gratuitous snub to John Hurt, this is just wrong. The actual proportion of archive used in the film is slightly under 25 per cent.

Sight & Sound should be free to publish reviews without fear or favour, but surely it is unacceptable to be this cavalier with the facts?

Tony Britten, by email

CHECKING OFF CHEKHOV

It is a pity that David Thompson fails to recognise two interesting screen adaptations of *Uncle Vanya* in his recent review of Chekhov on screen (Home Cinema, S&S, June). First there is Michael Blakemore's 1994 release *Country Life*, starring Sam Neill, Greta Scacchi and Kerry Fox, which transposes the play to Australia. Second we have the 1996 directorial debut of Anthony Hopkins, *August*, which shifts the action from Russia to North Wales at the turn of the century. Apart from playing Vanya himself, Hopkins cast an interesting array of Welsh talent for this film, including a young Rhys Ifans. Julian Mitchell's screenplay had already been directed by Hopkins at the Theatre Clwyd in Mold and the film benefits greatly from this when one considers the nuances in the performances.

Roy Pierce-Jones, by email

ROSEMARY'S BOOBOO

Your photo caption states that Jennifer Jones played Rosemary Hoyt in *Tender Is the Night* in 1962 ('Which Side of Paradise', S&S, June). Ms Jones was born in 1919 so even being Mrs David Selznick would scarcely have landed her the (lesser) role of a teenager. She played Nicole Diver.

Toby Stephens and Mira Sorvino starred in a TV movie of *The Great Gatsby* in 2000. It began with Gatsby being shot, which was odd.

Adele Paul, by email

MAN TO MAN

Duncan Roberts (Letters, S&S, June) takes me to task for describing *First Blood* and *Lethal Weapon* as right-wing texts, claiming they actually illustrate "the negativity of the Vietnam experience". Yet it seems obvious to me that these films criticise not the America which insisted on fighting a war in Vietnam but rather the

LETTER OF THE MONTH A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEPTH



Mark Cousins's article 'The Z Axis' (S&S, May) was an interesting overview of the emotional impact that can result from depth in composition. In his examples, he is quite correct in identifying deep focus as a "signature tune" of Orson Welles. Unfortunately, the frame from *Citizen Kane* of Susan Alexander's attempted suicide used to illustrate the article is not a pure example of deep focus. This was instead, as David Bordwell has pointed out, a multiple exposure, the glass and the bottle being filmed first, and the film rewound to shoot the body in the middle and the background action.

Nevertheless, what was much appreciated was Cousins's closing remark that "zedness" is ultimately personal. Where Welles, Wyler, Lean and others most effectively use deep focus is to create interest during a lengthier take by allowing movement of the actors,

and even more importantly, as a means to heighten dramatic effect. The Bernstein interview in *Citizen Kane* is a fine example of the former. (So too is the scene of Kane's mother signing over her son to Thatcher, although – again following Bordwell – young Kane outside in the snow is rear projection.)

For sheer dramatic effect it is difficult to top John Ford's breakfast scene in *The Searchers*, where Ethan kisses Martha behind Clayton's back; or, for that matter, Anna's appearance in the distance at the end of Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (above), a shot that rivals Lean capturing Sharif's emergence from a desert mirage in *Lawrence of Arabia*. Such shots are not only beautiful images. It is notable that each of these needs no dialogue, for depth itself functions as a means of pure cinema – and becomes, indeed, "a people thing."

Ray Lahey, Toronto, Canada

America which mysteriously failed to reintegrate veterans of the conflict. Since the question of why these individuals were sent to Vietnam in the first place cannot be addressed, their dilemma can only be subsumed in violent action through which masculinity is reaffirmed. This conservative strategy for recuperating Vietnam is a familiar one, finding its crudest expression in the 'back to Vietnam' cycle. Compare *Cutter's Way*, in which a critical analysis of the war is imbricated with a portrayal of the protagonist's recourse to violence as futile and absurd.

A similar point might be made concerning Roberts's insistence that *Scarface* might be "about the problems of gangsterism rather than about masculinity per se". Gangsterism is not an isolated 'problem' unconnected with the societies in which it occurs. As with the Vietnam War, there must be an explanation for its existence, and it is important to distinguish between those films, such as *Scarface*, which show gangsterism to be a product of both masculinity and capitalism, and those which attempt to mystify this connection.

As for Roberts's assertion that saying *Manhunter* is about the hero in the context of American

masculinity "is a bit like saying Hannibal Lecter's character represents a negative view of doctors in the context of medical ethics", I can only suggest he watch *Manhunter* again, as he will find that it explicitly problematises the heroic role by obscuring clear-cut distinctions between 'hero' and 'villain', a theme reinforced through imagery, structure and dialogue (Lecter's "The reason you caught me, Will, is we're just alike"). Roberts might also like to consider how the switch to a female protagonist in the sequel, *The Silence of the Lambs*, brings an entirely new set of issues into focus before assuming *Manhunter* is not centrally concerned with masculinity. If Clarice Starling's gender is relevant to our understanding of one film, surely Will Graham's gender is just as relevant to our understanding of the other.

Brad Stevens, by email

Additions and corrections

June Letters, p.78: Aspect ratios cited in first letter should have been in format: 1.85:1, 2.20:1, 2.35:1; p.96 *A Haunted House*, Certificate 15, 85m 43s, 7,14 ft +8 frames; p.100 *Iron Man 3*: Onscreen title: *Iron Man Three*, p.106 *Populaire* the 1 million box office referred to was ticket sales in number of attendees, not Euros; p.108 *The Stone Roses Made of Stone*, Certificate 15, 96m 35s, 8,692 ft +8 frames; **May** p.95 *Gimme the Loot*, Certificate 15, 79m 26s, 7,149 ft +0 frames

JOURNEY TO ITALY



An apparently random shot at the end of Rossellini's 1953 film encapsulates the director's egalitarian vision

By Brad Stevens

Although Roberto Rossellini's *Journey to Italy* (*Viaggio in Italia*, 1953) is now established as one of world cinema's supreme achievements, it still has a surprising number of detractors. I usually advise cinephiles who have trouble 'getting' the films Rossellini made with Ingrid Bergman to list all the things they perceive as flaws, then try to see them as misunderstood virtues. Take Bergman's performances, which seem so much clumsier than her Hollywood roles. By stripping away the actress's standard repertoire of gestures and line-readings, Rossellini revealed the genuine person usually concealed beneath the mask of technique. It says a great deal about our relationship to cinematic codes that many viewers consider Bergman's acting in these masterpieces to be 'unrealistic'. Even the crude dubbing has a positive function, preventing us from experiencing the films as professionally packaged entertainments whose rough edges have been smoothed away. Like the characters who are drifting aimlessly, the actors who were not given screenplays and the director who allowed the film's structure to be determined by chance, we are obliged to enter into an improvisational relationship with the work, becoming active participants in the construction

of meaning rather than passive consumers.

Journey to Italy focuses on a British couple, Katherine (Ingrid Bergman) and Alex Joyce (George Sanders), visiting Italy to sell some property they have inherited. Their marriage is on the verge of collapse and they have just agreed to divorce when, in the film's sublime final sequence, they find themselves in a town (Maiori) where a religious procession (an actual event into which Rossellini inserted his cast and crew) is taking place. Unable to drive through the crowded streets, the Joyces are obliged to leave their car, that shell which has protected them from too intimate an involvement with the people of Italy, and begin walking. Suddenly, cries of "miracolo" are heard and we see a man walking away from a wheelchair: a cripple appears to have found the ability to walk (though the way he keeps touching his eyes suggests he may have been blind and recovered his sight) – a genuine 'miracle' Rossellini was lucky enough to catch on camera. As various individuals struggle forward to get a better view, Katherine is pulled away from Alex, who runs after her. The couple embrace and the camera pans away but just as we think the film is going to end with this conventional closing shot, Rossellini abruptly cuts to a seemingly insignificant 'documentary'

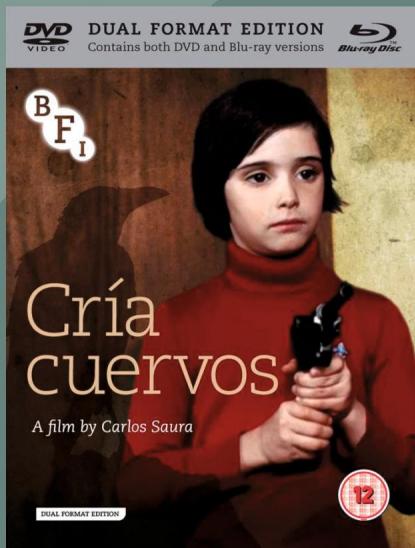
The suggestion is that these anonymous musicians have as much right to our attention as Ingrid Bergman

detail: several members of a band standing near a wall while participants in the procession walk past. This shot lasts 18 seconds and concludes with a fade to black as the camera, for no apparent reason, starts panning to the right. Tag Gallagher, in his 1998 book *The Adventures of Roberto Rossellini*, claims that the bandleader "smiles knowingly at Alex and Katherine" but it seems to me that this 'character' remains oblivious of the couple. The suggestion is not that star performers are more important than 'extras', but rather that these anonymous musicians have as much right to our attention as Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders. And *Journey to Italy*'s mixture of documentary and fiction functions in much the same way. Where Haskell Wexler showed the stars of *Medium Cool* (1969) interacting with actual rioters in order to make a point about the real-life events, Rossellini does precisely the opposite, allowing real-life events to make a point about the relative importance of his stars.

So what seems to be a clumsy flaw, a poorly thought out decision to end the film with a randomly selected image, proves on closer inspection to lie at the heart of Rossellini's vision, in which the rough is always preferred to the smooth, incompleteness to resolution, involvement to contemplation. If Alex and Katherine are guilty of using their car's windscreen as a protective barrier, we are just as guilty of using the cinema screen in the same way. Like the Joyces, like the actors who play them – like Rossellini – we must overcome the barrier of 'fiction' and experience the external world, flaws and all, without mediation. S

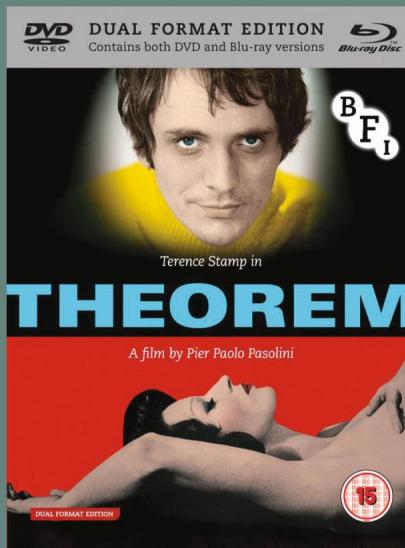


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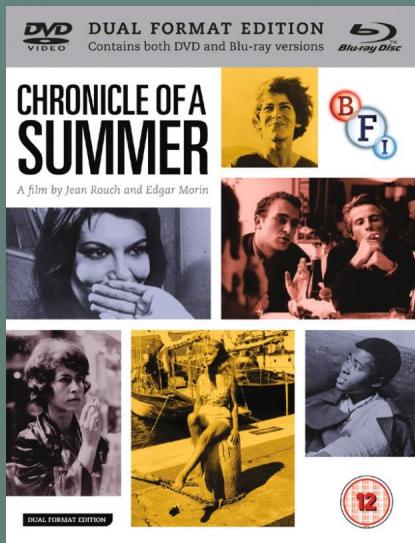
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